

# penquins

Issue No. 15  
Autumn 2002

## Zubot & Dawson

Dan Bern  
Great Big Sea  
James Gordon  
Entourloupe  
Vin Garbutt  
Tony McManus  
Guy Clark  
Heather MacLeod  
Ron Sexsmith  
Daniel Heikalo  
Gordon Quinton



WIN IAN TYSON LIVE AT LONGVIEW CDS— NEWS, REVIEWS, CHARTS AND MORE!





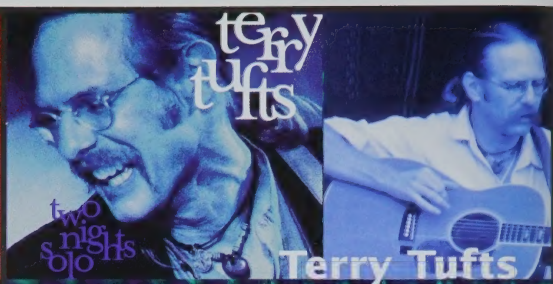
## TANGLEFOOT

agnes on the cowcatcher

### Tanglefoot

#### Agnes on the cowcatcher BCD143

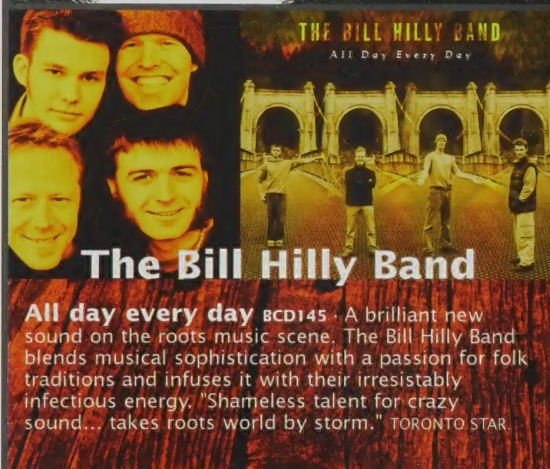
Championing the cause of Canadian history and mythology with 14 new songs of pride, passion, mayhem, splendour, muscle, tears, lust, longing, nerve, wit, honour and celebration. "The sound abounds with fiddles, guitars, banjos, accordions, and rich harmonies." MONTREAL GAZETTE



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All Day Every Day

### The Bill Hilly Band

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Precious Seconds

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## Nancy White

Stickers On Fruit

### Nancy White

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north wind

### Aengus Finnan

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Canada's folk, roots and world music magazine

# penguin eggs

Issue No. 15 Autumn 2002

Issn: 73060205

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Penguin Eggs welcomes news, live reviews, features and photos but cannot accept responsibility for any unsolicited material. Please check with the editor prior to submitting any articles or art work.. We publish four times a year: Summer (June), Autumn (September), Winter (December) and Spring (March). Unless noted, all text, and photos are copyright and may not be reproduced without prior permission. While we take care to ensure that all content is truthful, we cannot be held liable if found otherwise.

This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones' wonderful *Penguin Eggs* – a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such young, gifted performers as Kate Rusby and Eliza Carthy. Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982. He has never fully recovered and now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones' *Penguin Eggs* is available through Topic Records in Europe and Shanachie in North America

– Penguin Eggs is Printed in Canada –

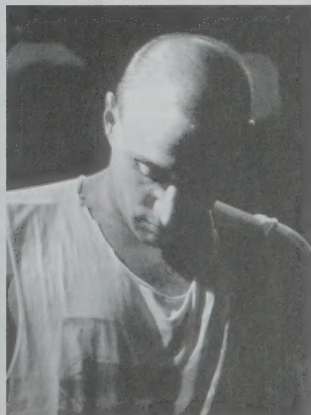
Cover photo by Frank Gasparik and the EFMF



Ron Sexsmith

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Dan Bern



Great Big Sea

# Charts

## Black Swan Top 10

- |                                                        |                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 <b>Scorch Trio</b><br>(Rune Grammofon)               | Scorch Trio             |
| 2 <b>Rovo</b><br>(Tzadik)                              | Tonic 2001              |
| 3 <b>Oum Kalsoum</b><br>(Next)                         | Anthologie              |
| 4 <b>Trevor Watts &amp; Vervan Westono</b><br>(Emanem) | Six Dialogues           |
| 5 <b>Michael Portal</b><br>(Futura)                    | Allors!!                |
| 6 <b>Trio Ivorie</b><br>(Enja)                         | Trio Ivorie             |
| 7 <b>Derek Bailey &amp; Min Xiao Fen</b><br>(Incus)    | Flying Dragons          |
| 8 <b>Khaled</b><br>(Nascente)                          | Best of The Early Years |
| 9 <b>Back Door</b><br>(Hux)                            | The Human Bed           |
| 10 <b>Herocane</b><br>(Momogram)                       | Kumartinis For All      |

Compiled from July & August sales: Black Swan Records, 3209 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C.

## Megatunes Top 10

- |                                                      |                     |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 <b>The Co-Dependents</b><br>(Indelible)            | Live Recording      |
| 2 <b>Eva Cassidy</b><br>(Blox Street)                | Imagine             |
| 3 <b>Solomon Burke</b><br>(Fat Possum)               | Don't Give Up On Me |
| 4 <b>Norah Jones</b><br>(Blue Note)                  | Come Away With Me   |
| 5 <b>Neko Case</b><br>(Lady Pilot)                   | Blacklisted         |
| 6 <b>Beth Orton</b><br>(Heavenly)                    | Daybreaker          |
| 7 <b>Craig Korth</b><br>(Independent)                | Bankview            |
| 8 <b>Carolyn Mark &amp; Her Room Mates</b><br>(Mint) | Terrible Hostess    |



Fred Eaglesmith: No. 6 in Ottawa

- |                                       |                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 9 <b>Dolly Parton</b><br>(Sugar Hill) | Halos and Horns |
| 10 <b>Todd Snider</b><br>(Old-Boy)    | New Connection  |

Compiled from July & August sales: Megatunes: 932 17th Ave., S.W. Calgary, Alberta.

## Compact Top 10

- |                                            |                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 <b>Harry Manx</b><br>(NorthernBlues)     | Wise And Otherwise              |
| 2 <b>Wilco</b><br>(Nonesuch)               | Yankee Hotel Foxtrot            |
| 3 <b>Flatlanders</b><br>(New West)         | Now Again                       |
| 4 <b>Kathleen Edwards</b><br>(Independent) | Failer                          |
| 5 <b>Otis Taylor</b><br>(NorthernBlues)    | Respect The Dead                |
| 6 <b>Fred Eaglesmith</b><br>(Outside)      | Falling Stars And Broken Hearts |
| 7 <b>Steve Earle</b><br>(E-Squared)        | Sidetracks                      |
| 8 <b>Stephen Fearing</b><br>(True North)   | That's How I Walk               |
| 9 <b>Be Good Tanyas</b><br>(Netwerk)       | Blue Horse                      |
| 10 <b>David Francey</b><br>(Laker Music)   | Far End Of Summer               |

Compiled from July & August sales: Compact Records, 785A Bank Street in the Glebe, Ottawa, Ontario

## Highlife Records Top 10

- |                                            |                            |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 <b>DI Cheb i Sabbah</b><br>(Six Degrees) | Frishna Lila               |
| 2 <b>Various Artists</b><br>(Universal)    | Verve/Remixed              |
| 3 <b>Beth Orton</b><br>(EMI)               | Daybreaker                 |
| 4 <b>Mbilia Bel</b><br>(Sono)              | Welcome                    |
| 5 <b>Salif Keita</b><br>(Universal)        | Timbuktu                   |
| 6 <b>Lauryn Hill</b><br>(Sony)             | MTV Unplugged              |
| 7 <b>Tom Waits</b><br>(American Original)  | Alice                      |
| 8 <b>Manu Chao</b><br>(EMI)                | Proxima Estacion Esperanza |
| 9 <b>Norah Jones</b><br>(Blue Note)        | Come Away With Me          |
| 10 <b>Various Artists</b><br>(BMG)         | Medina                     |

Compiled from July & August sales at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5 The



# News

Canadian folk music celebrities will soon have their names enshrined on bronze plaques on Bank Street in Ottawa. Ottawa City Council recently allocated \$8000 for the making and imbedding of eight pavement plaques as an initial step towards creating a folk music Walk of Fame. Staff at the Ottawa Folklore Centre pitched the initial idea to the Council, says its promotions liaison, **David Taylor**. Prior to approaching the City, Taylor sought designs from various local artists, and through consensus, settled upon a stylized maple leaf that will bear the name of each honoree. He estimated the cost and installation of each plaque at around \$1000. The Walk of Fame will open sometime next year with eight initial inductees with a further one a year to be added thereafter. The Centre wants national input into determining the initial recipients. Its director, **Arthur McGregor**, would like to conduct a national ballot over the Internet, and through Penguin Eggs. See ad on page 24. He also wants to see a volunteer board of directors set up to approve selections. They'll have their work cut out for them with numerous personalities deserving recognition. For the record, Penguin Eggs' selection would include: **Stan Rogers, Ian & Sylvia, Alan Mills, Jean Carignan, Edith Fowke, Helen Creighton, Oscar Brand and Wade Hemsworth**

★ ★ ★

Less thrilling news comes from the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals: Thieves broke into OCFE **Erin Benjamin's** truck and made off with her laptop. It contained many addresses both electronic and postal generated over the



**Laura Smith hurt in accident** years from the folk community at large. Erin asks you reconnect with the organization at [ocff@icomm.ca](mailto:ocff@icomm.ca). Its toll free phone number is 1.866.292.6233. Or write to P.O. Box 248, Station B, Sudbury, Ontario P3E 4N5. **Liz Harvey-Foulds** too had her hard drive crash. All was lost - bios, promo kits, contacts, grant applications, booking info and tentative gigs. However, anyone who has made inquiries regarding events hosted by Live From the Rock Blues and Folk Society (Red Rock, Ontario), or By the Bay Productions (Thunder Bay, Ont), or the Live From the Rock Folk Festival, or those who have sent promo or talked to her about bookings on line, please resubmit. Her email remains [lizfoulds@nwconx.net](mailto:lizfoulds@nwconx.net)

★ ★ ★

**Laura Smith** was involved in a serious accident over the Canada Day Long Weekend. She was struck by a fence post hit by a runaway horse that charged into her yard. She suffered a lacerated spleen. While she seems well on her way to recovery, she had to give up her lead role in the touring musical, *Menopausitive*, and several solo performances. She'll be back singing as soon as her doctors allow it.

★ ★ ★

When bluegrass harmonica virtuoso, **Mike Stevens**, (featured in P.E. No.10) toured rural Labrador in November, 2000, he was appalled at the widespread use of solvent sniffing he witnessed among native youths. Since then, Stevens has returned frequently to the region at his own expense and donated hundreds of harmonicas to kids in an effort to encourage

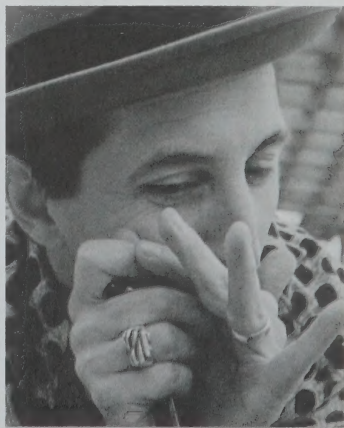
them to use music as a positive alternative to self-abuse. His philanthropy has now inspired the formation of The ArtsCan Circle - an independent, volunteer-run support group dedicated to using music and other creative arts, as a focus for communities suffering severe problems related to poverty, lack of work, family dysfunction, and the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome, as well as solvent abuse. The aim of the ArtsCan Circle is to support small groups of musicians interested in travelling to Labrador and Davis Inlet to encourage kids with their musical endeavors. It also asks musicians and clubs to organize benefits and to donate used instruments for the project. For further information contact [www.artscancircle.ca](http://www.artscancircle.ca) or write to [info@artscancircle.ca](mailto:info@artscancircle.ca).

★ ★ ★

Following the spring signing of Victoria's **Bill Hilly Band**, Borealis Records has further bolstered its roster by adding **Aengus Finnan**, **Ron Hynes** and legendary Toronto street musician **Bob Snider**. Finnan, among the winners of this year's New Folk Competition at the Kerrville folk festival in Texas with his song *O'Shaughnessey's Lament*, will release his new 14-track disc, *North Wind*, in early October. Hynes, who received an honorary Doctorate of Letters from Memorial University in recognition of his original songwriting and his contribution to the cultural heritage of his home province, Newfoundland, will begin recording in the fall with **Paul Mills** as producer. Mills' credits include the majority of Stan Rogers' recordings. Snider spent the summer recording and will release his yet untitled



Ian & Sylvia: Walk of Fame?



Mike Stevens: Harmonicas for kids



# News



Nancy White new record release

disc in mid-November. Borealis will also release **Nancy White's** latest recording *Stickers on Fruit* sometime in September, possibly in an orchard.

★ ★ ★

**Matthew Lien**, voted Yukon Artist of the Year at this year's West Coast Music Awards, continues his work on behalf of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with the upcoming *Walk To Washington, D.C.* Lien is expected to perform at special concert events along the way. The *Walk*, originally conceived by Lien and photographer **Ken Madsen**, and developed by the Caribou Commons Project, starts in three locations in the US (Seattle, WA, Saratoga Springs, NY, and Kansas City, MO), converging on Washington, D.C., November 2002. Its purpose is to bring a message from the Gwich'in aboriginal people of Canada and Alaska to the President of the United States that Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge must be permanently protected from the current threat of oil and gas development. For more information in the *Walk To Washington*, and Lien's performance schedule, visit the web site of the Caribou Commons Project at [www.cariboucommons.com](http://www.cariboucommons.com).

★ ★ ★

Prairie Music Week will take place in Winnipeg from September 26 – 29 in conjunction with Folk Alliance Canada's Folk Meet 2002. The theme for the conference is No Smoke, No Mirrors – a premise that is meant to demystify the music industry for delegates. The conference will include a series of hands-on instrumental workshops for keyboard, drums, guitar, and voice. Folk meet discussions will focus on alternative presenting strategies, folk music as a business, pushing programming boundaries, accessing new mar-

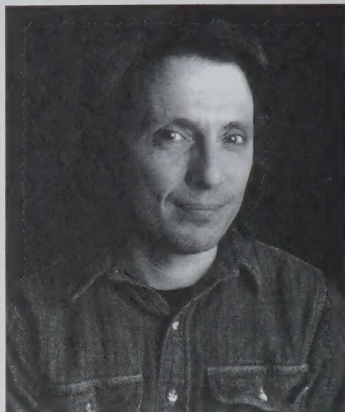
kets, and workshop etiquette. Showcases will include over 50 up-and-coming acts. Prairie Music Week culminates with its annual artistic awards show on Sunday, September 29, at The Walker Theatre. The nominees for Outstanding Roots Recording are **The Wyrd Sisters** (*Sin & Other Salvations*), **James Keelaghan** (*Home*), **Das Macht Show** (*One Night In Berlin*), **Dale Nikkel** (*Still Learning Tricks*) and **Maria Dunn** (*For A Song*). Nominees for Outstanding Aboriginal Recording include **Winston Wuttunee** (*The Best of Winston Wuttunee*), **Cindy Scott** (*This Northern Girl*), **Squaw'kin Iskewwak** (*Wymyn's Songs*), **War Party** (*The Reign*), and **Nakoda Lodge** (*Dark Realm*). For more information, write to [info@prairiemusicweek.com](mailto:info@prairiemusicweek.com).

★ ★ ★

The deadline for The International Songwriting Competition is September 30, 2002. Prizes now exceed over \$65,000 in cash and merchandise. Categories include folk, world music and lyrics only. Songs will be judged by the likes of **Monte Lipman** (President of Universal Records), **Rob Thomas** (lead Singer for *Matchbox 20*), **Andy Summers** (performer and ex-member of *The Police*) and **Eddie Kramer** (Producer/engineer of *The Beatles*, *Led Zeppelin*, *The Rolling Stones*, *Jimi Hendrix*, etc.) Online electronic submissions (MP3 files) as well as postal mail submissions are accepted. Entrants may submit multiple songs in as many categories as they wish. All entries must be postmarked before or on this date. For more information go to: <http://www.songwriting-competition.com>

★ ★ ★

Calgary's latest live music venue, Jackdaw's, is looking for original acoustic, folk, roots performers to play its 85-seater room. "We intend to present the finest folk roots



**James Gordon** songwriting weekend retreat artists that we can afford in a cozy, intimate fireside setting. Sort of like a good house concert with the ambience of a friendly neighborhood pub," says music director, **Tom Wilson**. Contact Wilson at [tomwilsonmusic@shaw.ca](mailto:tomwilsonmusic@shaw.ca).

★ ★ ★

**James Gordon** is hosting a songwriting weekend retreat, October 4 - 6 at the beautiful Woodland Echoes Resort near Muskoka village of Magnetawan, Ontario. He'll, apparently, share his songwriter's secrets in a friendly, relaxing atmosphere. The assembled group will write a song together and exchange notes and ideas. It's open to both the aspiring professional or occasional songwriter. The package includes a Friday night wine and cheese reception and jam session, all meals, all on-site, Saturday banquet and concert, shared accommodations in waterfront cottages (some with hot tubs) and use of extensive Resort recreation facilities. For more information, and reservations: [www.woodlandechoes.on.ca](http://www.woodlandechoes.on.ca)

★ ★ ★

Still with Gordon, he has just released *Tune Cooties*, the fourth and last of the silly song series of CDs from his work with CBC Radio's Basic Black Programme. He has also a new song, *Friendly Fire* (about the U.S. bombing of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan) on an unusual double CD compilation, *Sixty Second Songs* on Guelph's DROG Records. It features, believe it or not, 88 songs by 88 different recording artists – mostly from the Guelph area. And yes, they are all just one minute long. Other artists involved include **Stephen Fearing**, **Tannis Slimmon**, **Luther Wright** and **The Wrongs**, and Gordon's progeny, Evan, and Geordie. The CD is available online through [www.maplemusic.com](http://www.maplemusic.com) and the proceeds go to worthy organizations.

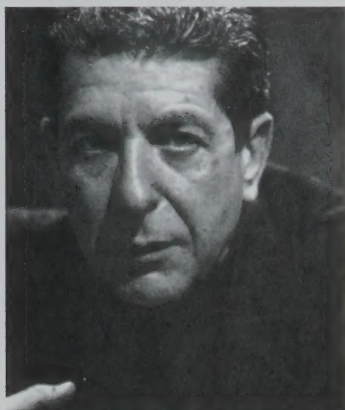
★ ★ ★



Dale Nikkel Prairie Music Award nomination



## News



**Leonard Cohen** celebrations in the pipeline Welsh harpist **Robin Huw Bowen** recently won a British Academy of Film and Television Award for his music on a Welsh-language film "Eldra" about the life of **Eldra Jarman**. She was the last of the Roberts family of Welsh Gypsy harpists and taught Bowen many of her family's tunes. His award was for the best original music for film in 2001. These awards are the UK's equivalent of the Oscars.

★ ★ ★

Irish fiddler **Kevin Burke** has been awarded a 2002 American National Heritage Fellowship by the National Endowment of the Arts. Previous recipients have included **BB King**, **Doc Watson** and Irish-American fiddler **Liz Carroll**. He was a member of the seminal Irish traditional music group **The Bothy Band** in the 1970s, and has gone on to become one of the world's most respected fiddlers of any genre. Since 1979, Burke has made his home in Portland, Oregon.

★ ★ ★

Edmonton-based doctor, **Kim Solez**, will host the first **Leonard Cohen** Night, Sept. 26 – which coincides with the great man's 68th birthday – in the City's Telus Centre. The idea was inspired by the annual tributes held for Scottish poet **Robert Burns** each January. Instead of haggis and whiskey, Solez will serve Montreal smoked meat sandwiches and Cohen's favourite drink, Red Nettle. Solez has inspired friends in Leicester, England, and Toowoomba, Australia, to hold similar events around the same time.

★ ★ ★

England's Down River Recordings has finished compiling its first volume of vintage folk club recordings for release this year. The first volume includes unique, hitherto unreleased recordings from **Pete Atkin**, **Peter Bellamy**, **Bill Caddick**, **Frogmorton**, **Vin Garbutt**, **Hot Vultures**, **Al Jones**, **Oak** and **Al**

**Stewart**. The time frame for the material is 1969 to 1976. **Keith Christmas's** track, *Ballad of Robin Head* (he was stoned in the greenwood) previously appeared on the compilation album, *49 Greek Street*. Profits from the sale of the CDs go to the Epping-based Rhys Daniels Trust, which enables families to live in special accommodation while their children undergo periods of medical treatment. For information: [www.martinkingbury.co.uk/cd/cdnotes.htm](http://www.martinkingbury.co.uk/cd/cdnotes.htm).

★ ★ ★

The Copenhagen-based Storyville label has reissued a batch of archival British folk albums. All five have long been out-of-print. The first two are ones that **Alex Campbell** recorded in Denmark in the 1960s, namely his *Live in Copenhagen* (1965) and *Live at Tivoli Gardens* (1967). The **Ian Campbell Folk Group** was the first British folk act to go to Denmark and they paved the way for many later folk acts, including the **McCalmans**, **Alex Campbell** and **Martin Carthy** and **Dave Swarbrick**, **Sandy Denny** and the **Strawbs** and **Paul Simon**. Each volume comes with its own little piece of Anglo-Danish history, in the shape of CD booklet notes by **Ken Hunt**. For more information, visit [www.storyville-records.com](http://www.storyville-records.com). The U.K.'s Fledg'ling Records has secured the reissue rights to two of the more important works that the British folk-rock movement ever made happen. With a cast of dozens, *Morris On* and *The Complete Dancing Master* appear this autumn. For updates: [www.thebeesknees.com](http://www.thebeesknees.com).

★ ★ ★

The University of Newcastle, England, is offering a degree in Folk and Traditional Music. It starts in October. Instructors include **Kathryn Tickell**, **Alistair Anderson**, **Catriona Macdonald**, **Karen Tweed** and **Sandra Kerr**. For further details visit [www.ncl.ac.uk/music](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/music)



Robin Huw Bowen British film award

★ ★ ★

**Michael McKean**, **David St Hubbins** of **Spinal Tap**, has been talking about his and fellow-Tapster **Christopher Guest's** new take on the US folk-hootenanny scene called *A Mighty Wind*. Dealing with the **The Folkmen**, **Mitch and Mickey** and **The New Mainstream Singers**, McKean says it is a story of "grinning apes with guitars, strumming their asses off, playing terrible songs which often became hits." That's the folk scene for you.

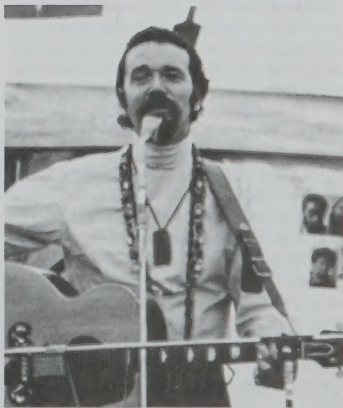
★ ★ ★

**Udo Lindenberg's** *Atlantic Affairs* has been transformed into a television film/documentary which commemorates the artists and intellectuals who fled fascist Germany. By which he means people like **Bert Brecht**, **Marlene Dietrich**, **Hanns Eisler**, **Friedrich Hollaender**, **Peter Lorre**, **Anna Seghers** and **Kurt Weill**. Lindenberg plays a singer who inherits twenty suitcases in New York and on the Atlantic crossing he discovers documents and the life-stories of all these people who escaped the Nazi tentacles. Among the people interpreting the émigrés' words are **Ellen ten Damme**, **Nathalie Dorra**, **Tim Fischer** and **Yvonne Catterfield**. The film's premiere takes place in Bremen on 3 October. Lindenberg will be promoting the CD with domestic and foreign tours.

★ ★ ★

The late **Dave Van Ronk** will have a street named after him in New York's, Greenwich Village. *Dave Van Ronk Street* will encompass the block of Sheridan Square, on which he lived for more than 30 years. Van Ronk influenced numerous young folk singers drawn to the Village's coffee houses in the early '60s.

★ ★ ★



Alex Campbell: albums re-released



# Alan Lomax: 1915 - 2002



Woody Guthrie, Lily Mae Ledford & Alan Lomax

The field collector and ethnomusicologist, broadcaster, writer and performer **Alan Lomax** has died, aged 87. Born on January 31 1915 in Austin, Texas, he died after a lengthy period of failing health on July 19 in Safety Harbor, Florida, writes Ken Hunt

Lomax was a catalyst as much as anything else. He made things happen, not least of all because he was a networker long before the word was coined. On the grand Venn diagram of the folkish arts, he linked, and linked us to, amazing people such as **Zora Neale Hurston**, **Ruth Crawford Seeger**, **Leadbelly**, **Pete Seeger**, **Almeda Riddle**, the Alabama 'Sacred Harp' Singers, the **Trallaleri** of Genoa and **Jeannie Robertson**—let's truncate any list now—yet he was close to the man on the street or in the field, the woman in the pew or at a picnic, the girl helping her dad, the boy at play.

Lomax's skill, apart from the obvious business in being in the right place at the right time, lay in how he connected with people. He could turn on the charm and, by being genuinely interested in learning about them and their art, win them round or coax them out of their shyness at dealing with someone as cified as him. At the other extreme, he could be self-opinionated, crotchety and, as many remember, apt to talk over people. That does not matter in the greater scheme of things. It does not matter that his organisationally unsound process for appreciating stylistic continuity and change known as Cantometrics never took off and

wound up being used as an example of a dodgy principle stretched beyond its elasticity. It does not matter that he ungallantly wrote **Shirley Collins** out of his 1959 field trips in print (though he subsequently recanted to me and to New York's Hunter College, where Lomax's archive is held, which recognised that it was she who took the pictures that fed our imaginations). What matters is that I am but one of many who cannot imagine the world without Lomax's contributions to our musical universe. Whether through his field collecting and subsequent records, through the way people later kneaded his raw materials in order to bake and shape his harvest into new forms (some of which he disapproved of), through 'Po' Lazarus' finding a new-found measure of glory in O Brother, Where Art Thou?, Moby sampling Lomax's field recordings, or the songs of Leadbelly (in which he reasonably for the day snared a publishing percentage on the basis of something of something is better than 100 percent of nothing) going out into the world, he did it. But for every **Huddie Ledbetter** or **Fred McDowell**, there were a **James 'Iron Head' Baker** and a **Mose 'Clear Rock' Platt** who left their fingerprints.

As the son of the folklorist **John Avery Lomax** (1875-1948), he joined a father-and-son team that Pete Seeger once described as "the greatest American folk song collectors". His father was a considerable influence and put him on the path. Through his authorship of *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* and *The Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, Lomax Snr. was an important link in the chain, as much a signpost to White America shaking off its Eurocentric cultural shackles and beginning to believe in its own demotic worth. As a vali-

ation of his father's work, Lomax Jnr. had only to look to President Roosevelt's penned words in the introduction in his dad's book.

Father and son were co-credited as authors of *American Ballads & Folk Songs* (1934), a book described as representing "twenty-five years of desultory collecting". By 1966, it had reached twenty printings. It gathered together Black folksongs, transplanted British broadsides organically modified by an American tilth, Cajun Creole love songs, Black gospel and the sort of cowboy stories that Ian Tyson would weave into the Canadian fabric. Having endured all manner of privations in a thoroughly racist South where any White boy showing an interest in the culture of the opposite colour, to put it mildly, was suspicious, he experienced a cultural manumission in 1935. He went to the Bahamas. "It was the greatest summer of my life," he told me in 1993, "because there I could live freely and speak freely with Blacks in a way I could never do in the South. It was like heaven."

In his foreword to *The People's song book* (1948) Lomax wrote of the potential of folk, "Slowly I began to realize that here was an emerging tradition that represented a new kind of human being, a new folk community composed of progressives and anti-fascists and union members. These folk, heritors of the democratic tradition of folklore, were creating for themselves a folk-culture of high moral and political content." During the 1948 presidential race, like the writer **Studs Terkel**, Lomax, backed the losing side. The creeping fog of McCarthyism created a climate of oppression that Lomax could not tolerate. In 1950 he relocated to England—his base of operations until 1957. Lomax arrived trailing clouds of glory because of his authorship of *Mister Jelly Roll* (afterwards published by Pan Books in 1958). He soon formed alliances with like-minded people in broadcasting and the arts. **Alan Lomax** and the **Ramblers**, a skiffle group including **Ewan MacColl**, **Peggy Seeger**, **Shirley Collins**, **Bryan Daly** and various others, had a folk-hued repertoire and 'an authenticity' unusual in skiffle with their mixture of MacColl's originals and Lomax-derived material from Southern penitentiaries. Under his own name, Lomax would continue to make records such as *Raise A Ruckus And Have A Hootenanny* (with the Dupree Family) but his singing had more gusto than merit, more tannin than headiness. In a wise career move, he concentrated on collecting, academic research, publishing and broadcasting.

Contrary to some commentators' remarks that Lomax persuaded the B.B.C. to start collecting folk music, the scheme to rescue mate-



## News

rial fast disappearing under the onslaught of 'mechanical media reproduction' was under way before his arrival on the scene in 1951. Indisputably however, Lomax galvanized people. (Peculiarly, it was Lomax who introduced **Bert Lloyd** to MacColl.) Around him gathered a coterie of like-minded individuals including Peter Kennedy and **Seamus Ennis**. During this European sojourn one of the main projects to which he contributed was the 18-volume *Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music* for Columbia. Lomax did not necessarily make all the recordings himself. He compiled and edited material, bartered material from the B.B.C. archives, and used foreign contacts in Spain and Italy, for example. Throughout his life, a big part of Lomax's skill lay in mobilizing such resources, whether the input of **Mary Elizabeth Barnicle**, **Shirley Collins**, **Diego Carpitella** or Peter Kennedy.

With the deadhand of McCarthyism lifted, Lomax returned to the USA. In 1959 he invited Shirley Collins to be his assistant on what became the Southern Folk Heritage Series—released in the early 1960s as thematic albums. It ranks alongside Harry Smith's justifiably lauded anthology as a repository of Americana, but Lomax was recording it, not shuffling shellac.

Musically speaking, Lomax's typical position was entrenched, solidly purist, if not puritanical. At the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, he introduced several blues workshops before the **Albert Grossman**-managed (there was a friction here) **Paul Butterfield Blues Band**, a non-segregated, that is, mixed-race, blues band set up for the afternoon workshop. Archly, the man who had recorded **Muddy Waters** began, "Well, this afternoon you've heard some of the greatest blues musicians in America..." He had missed the point on several levels.

Nevertheless, technology always fascinated him—recording technology and information technology in particular. From 1961 he worked on a series of overlapping, organically evolving projects on the world's folk music. The theories of Cantometrics would evolve into a project called *The Global Jukebox* but ultimately phut out. It will be for his recordings, his songbooks and his *The Land Where The Blues Began* (1993), for which I shall remember him. Irrespective whether he disliked it on occasions, Lomax was a profoundly important link in the chain that links folk and popular music.

★ ★ ★

Traditional English singer **Fred Jordan**, died 30 July, writes Ken Hunt. Born on 5 January 1922 in Ludlow, Shropshire, Jordan was an interpreter of great subtlety who imbued songs such as *The Outlandish Knight*,

*Barbara Allan*, *The Bonny Boy*, *We Shepherds Are The Best of Men*, *The Banks of Sweet Primroses* and *The Farmer's Boy* with a relevance that they should never have lost. He sang stories, simple as that, and did it with the deffest touch. What separated his records from those of many of the 'old gaffers' who were obliged to drum up enough songs to make an LP was the size and stock of his repertoire. If songs were iron filings, he had a magnetic ear. Like Harry Cox, he soaked up songs. Remember him by his *Songs of A Shropshire Farm Worker* (1966), *When The Frost Is On The Pumpkin* (1974) and *In The Course of Time* (1991). A loss but a great legacy too and, as his niece said at his funeral, he died with his boots on. It would have tickled him.

★ ★ ★

Oregon-based singer songwriter **Dave Carter**, died of a heart attack July 19. He was 49. Born in Oxnard, California, Carter worked as a mathematician and computer programmer until pursuing a music career full time in 1991. He teamed up with Tracy Grammer two years later. **Vic Bell**, Artistic Director of the Nickelodeon Folk Club in Calgary writes: Dave wrote with Spirit, Magic and Heart. I write these words large because they were such a large part of his music and the man I understood him to be. He had a huge talent, the finest songwriter I've encountered in years. At his last concert at the Nickelodeon he spoke of how many of his songs came to him in dreams. After their encore, I expressed to our audience the hope that Dave would continue having those dreams. Now it's not to be. I feel robbed and cheated that Dave has been taken so soon. My heart goes out to Tracy. I feel complete gratitude that I was able spend some time with him and hear his songs in person.

★ ★ ★

Rhythm 'n blues pioneer **Rosco Gordon** died of natural causes at his Queens, New York, residence on July 11, 2002. He was 74. A native of Memphis, born April 10, 1928, Gordon rose to fame in the early fifties with a string of hits for the Chess, RPM and Duke labels. He also recorded for legendary producer **Sam Phillips'** Sun Records. While he retired in the '60s, he reconvened his career in 1984. Pairing up with **Duke Robillard** in 2000 on *Memphis, Tennessee* earned Rosco a Handy Award nomination as Comeback Artist of the Year. Last May, he returned to Memphis, joining old friends **B.B. King**, and **Ike Turner** for a tribute to Phillips at the Handys. Rosco Gordon unique contributions to contemporary music of many styles will long endure, writes **Richard Flohll**. He will be especially missed for his youthful optimism and unquenchable creative spirit.

★ ★ ★

## Editorial

Obviously the Albion Band had Canadian folk festivals in mind when they recorded *Time To Ring Some Changes*. The festival structure here sorely requires an overhaul.

Largely, the problem lies with so-called workshops — an anachronism left over from a bygone era. Workshops were once an opportunity for musicians and singers to pass on the tradition. With little in the way of technical props, pundits taught their audiences about the source and structure of their repertoire. Sadly nobody teaches at festivals today.

The modern format falls somewhere between an elaborate jam session and a song circle. And when they work, they truly are inspiring for both onlooker and participant. Yet more and more, they wind up a frustrating ineffective waste of time. Intricate sound-checks for upwards of a dozen demanding musicians can leave little in an hour-long slot for performance. It gets even worse with three bands on stage at the same time. And they do get packed onto these small day-time stages because the big folk festivals book upwards of 60 acts — the large majority of whom will perform over a two-day weekend. Not even the most disciplined diehard fan can absorb that much music within that framework.

Reduce the size of the bill, ease congestion on the side stages, and save money. Seems simple enough. Yet Canadian festivals take pride in the variety they offer. And the more of it the merrier. So rather than crop the amount of participants make them more accessible — allow more solo sets. Typically, each act plays one concert (usually at the same time as someone as equally appealing but at opposite ends of the grounds). Two solo sets staggered on different days offers a viable alternative solution to continuing frustrations.

Edmonton recently renamed its workshops, 'sessions' — as in the Irish sense of the word, where performers creatively intermingle if the mood suits. Apparently, some international acts still thought they had to talk and teach on arrival in Alberta. The concept of a session they can grasp. While it's a more honest term, the emperor still needs new clothes. Workshops/sessions run best with structure, albeit flexible rather than suggested guidelines advanced from silly, obscure titles most ignore. Some, like those dominated by the Celts, for example, normally run on automatic pilot. So why can't equally talented but disparate participants receive advance information about the shared stages they're scheduled to grace? Quality surely takes precedence over quantity. The current status quo suggests otherwise.

— Roddy Campbell



# Win Ian Tyson: Live In Longview CDs

Ian Tyson rode in the vanguard of the initial 1960s folk revival with his partner Sylvia Fricker. Ian and Sylvia wrote and recorded such hits as *Four Strong Winds*, *Someday Soon* and *You Were On My Mind*. They would go on to pioneer country rock with their band *The Great Speckled Bird*. Ian eventually retreated to the foothills of the Alberta Rockies. There he wrote and recorded *Old Corral* and *Sagebrush and Cowboyography* – two albums that sparked a revival in cowboy songs and rejuvenated a career that shows no signs of flagging. Last October, Tyson recorded *Live At Longview*, in his local village hall. It features a combination of favourites, classics and several new songs. And *Stony Pain Records* have been kind enough to send us six copies of this beautifully packaged 17-track CD for you to win. All you have to do is answer the following three questions listed below and e-mail your answers to [penguineggs@hotmail.com](mailto:penguineggs@hotmail.com). Please include a postal address.

**Q1: In which Canadian province was Ian Tyson born?**

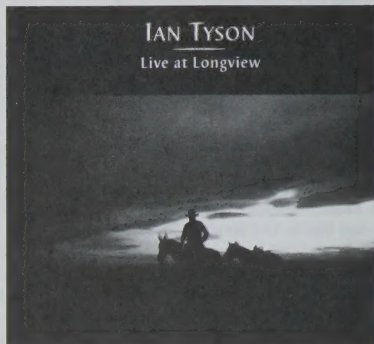
**Q2: Who wrote *The Great Speckled Bird*?**

**Q3: Who had an international hit with *Four Strong Winds* in 1978?**

Answers to the *The Rough Guide To The Delta Blues Competition* are:

1: Muddy Waters, 2: Illinois Central, 3: Texas

The winners are: Karen Welk, Ft. MacMurray, AB; Laura Bird, Toronto, ON; Richard Flohill, Toronto, ON; Bruce Meredith, Courtice, ON; Shirley Gibson, Toronto, ON and David Thompson, Kamloops, BC.



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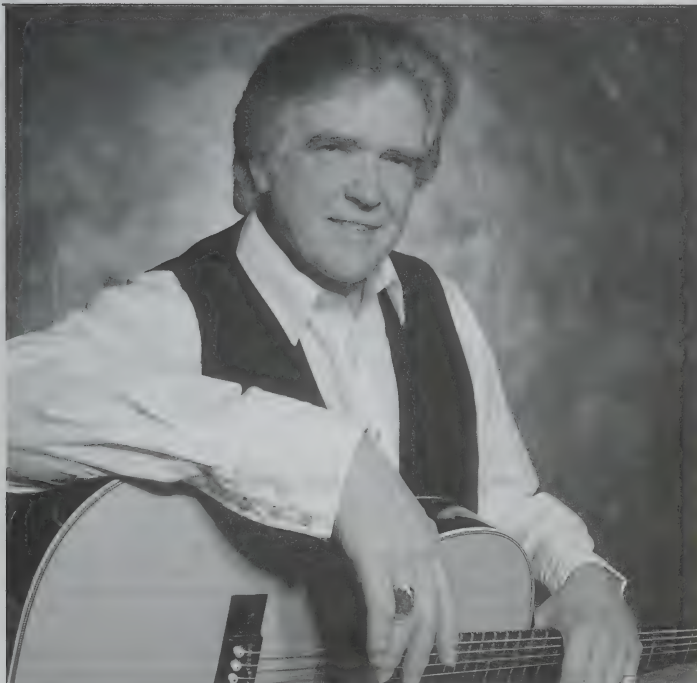
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# Tubthumping



Guy Clark

## Tales From The Dark Side

Texas troubadour Guy Clark just released *The Dark*, his first new disc in three years. Bob Remington sheds a little light on one of America's best songwriters.

If Guy Clark was writing this story about himself, it would be way more colorful and 10 times as good, for few people write as well as he does. This interview, no doubt, would have been much better had we simply sat down and got drunk together, but at the time he didn't seem up for it.

"I think I've had about all the fun I can handle," said the Texas troubadour, back stage at the recent Edmonton Folk Music Festival.

He lied, of course. Later that night, I saw some lucky son of a bitch playing a guitar and having a few drinks with Clark, simply one of

the best American songwriters of his generation.

Guy Clark really doesn't write songs. He tells stories. Stories about misfits and losers and of people living life on their own terms. Earlier that day, in a set on one of the folk festival's side stages, he was spellbinding with his unhurried, poignant narratives, most of which I had forgotten. I hadn't listened to Clark's music in years — it's too much like sitting down in front of your stereo and opening up a wound. No, Clark is way better live. If you ever get the chance, take it.

His new album, *The Dark*, is far from being his best work, but there are haunting songs that stick with you, like little movies. Drawn from recent experiences of himself or those around him, the album includes stories about a dog named Queenie that gets shot, a failed Nashville songwriter named Betty ends up a

bum, a soldier gets his leg amputated and a cowgirl who spends her days drinking Wild Turkey and riding horses. In *Homeless*, he writes about a scene on a Nashville street corner witnessed by a friend, Ray Stevenson, who saw someone holding a sign that said 'Friend for life — 25 cents.' The song came out that day. Among the characters in *Homeless* is Betty, who "sings a song that no one hears and the wind begins to freeze your tears/God it's been so many years but she's way past complaining."

*Queenie's Song* tells the story of a guy whose dog got shot, based on the true story of fellow Texas songwriter Terry Allen.

"I was staying at his house on New Year's Day and he came in and said, 'Man, some son of a bitch just shot my dog.' In the song, Queenie's owner swears he'll hunt the bastard down, which never happened. 'Terry thinks he knows who done it and he died,' Clark said.

At the age of 60, the native of the dry West-Texas desert still slogs it out on the road, something he hates.

"The travel it beats you to death and I don't like it and I wish there was a way I didn't have to do it. But for that hour or hour and a half, that's what I do. And whatever it takes to get to that point is the job."

Although "Texas will always be home," Clark has lived in Nashville for years, moving there after bolting from Los Angeles, which he wrote about in his classic *L.A. Freeway*, bidding adieu in the lyrics to the one decent person he claims he knew, a 6-foot-five-inch bass player named Dennis Sanchez. "Here's to you old skinny Dennis/ The only one I think I will miss I can hear that old bass singing/ Sweet and low like a gift you're bringin'."

"We had a little string band and Dennis and I always tended to have too much fun together," Clark says. A few years ago, he started building flamenco guitars in his garage workshop, resuming a craft he practiced 30 years ago. He's pictured on *The Dark* liner jacket surrounded by his tools, guitar moulds and wood.

"I had a little 8 track studio I hadn't used in years, so I just packed it up, put it in the closet, put up a workbench and started building flamenco guitars."

A guitar collector himself, he owns two Canadian-made guitars built by Michael Heiden, of Chilliwack B.C., who now almost exclusively makes mandolins that are considered among the finest in the world. Other than Rex's Blues, written by his close friend, the



# Tubthumping

late Townes Van Zandt, all of The Dark is co-written by Clark and several friends.

"They're not solely written by me, which is something I've been into lately and enjoy. They're things I know about or things that have happened to me or to friends of mine. It's just the first good 12 songs that I came up with and that's when it's time to make a record. Songs don't come easy to me. That's the hardest thing, the writing and finding a dozen or so you're willing to commit to."

Van Zandt he misses dearly.

"He was my best friend for 35 years. It's a big hole out of your life. I miss him every day mainly because he's the funniest son of a bitch I ever met. For all of his dark side that most people are aware of, he was maybe the smartest and funniest guy I ever met."

In his great song *Cold Dog Soup*, Clark wrote about Van Zandt in a bar in Mission Beach, Calif.

"Townes Van Zandt standin' at the bar/Skinnin' a Hollywood movie star. Can't remember where he parked his car/Or to whom he lost the keys. Full of angst and hill-billy haiku/What's a poor Ft. Worth boy to do. Go on rhyme somethin' for em' man/Show him how you really feel."

"True story," says Clark. "I've seen it many times. Many, many times."

Most of his audiences are made up of long-time fans, although he's seeing a second generation of people coming to hear him for the first time. At the Edmonton folk festival, several younger faces came up to him to shake his hand.

"They say 'I grew up listening to you; my uncle turned me on to you. I never heard you before today.'" So, there's some of that, but it's usually preaching to the choir. Everybody knows what they're coming to hear."

Mostly what they hear are stories about characters who live life against the odds and taking chances doing what they want to do. In *The Cape*, about a kid jumping off a garage with a gunny sack around his neck pretending to be Superman, Clark writes: "He's still jumpin' off the garage and will be till he's dead. All these years the people said he's actin' like a kid. He did not know he could not fly, so he did." And in *Picasso's Mandolin*: "Well it's colorin' books and drinkin' wine/it's hard to stay between the lines/Ain't no rule if you don't break it/ ain't no chance if you don't take it."

Like his characters, Clark has led his own life, on his own terms, commercialism be damned. "I've just never considered doing anything else. However that falls and whatever obstacles you happen to run across is the way it goes. I mean, why do something you don't want to do? I'm surviving so far, but all the votes aren't in yet."



Tony McManus

## The Chief of DADGAD

Only the best guitar players working in the Celtic tradition can meet all the technical demands and still have time and space to inject feeling into their performance. In the past decade the most inventive and impressive among them is Scotland's Tony McManus, reckons our Tony Montague

Few people now question the place of the guitar in Anglo-Celtic traditions, but it wasn't always so. The guitar didn't make a regular appearance in music from the Atlantic Northwest until the folk revival of the '50s. Even then it was almost always strummed, and used as an accompaniment to songs or (later) to other instruments. The first musicians to specialize in playing melodies were Davey Graham, John Renbourn, and Bert Jansch, in the '60s. They created a new voice and vocabulary, but as a lead instrument the guitar is rare in Celtic music, and for a good reason: it's devilishly tricky to pick out a clear melodic line at speed on such a large box while adding the requisite ornamentation, maintaining rhythmic drive, and pitching in the odd chord and discreet harmonic flourish.

Only the best guitar players working in the Celtic tradition can meet all the technical demands and still have time and space to inject

feeling into their performance. In the past decade the most inventive and impressive among them is Scotland's Tony McManus.

McManus performs mainly traditional Scots and Irish tunes, but he also loves to play Breton, Quebecois, Asturian, and Galician tunes too - not to mention making occasional forays into whatever else takes his fancy. This summer, touring to promote his third and latest album *Ceol More*, McManus travelled across North America from the Stan Rogers Festival in Canis to the Chet Atkins Convention in Nashville and the California World Music Festival in Grass Valley. Penguin Eggs caught up with the peripatetic Pictish picker in B.C.'s own Fraser valley. On the mainstage at the Mission folk festival on Saturday night McManus delivered a dazzling and eclectic set, which included a Breton tune, a Jewish piece *Shalom Aleichem*, Charles Mingus' *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*, and Louis Armstrong's *Wonderful World*.

"I guess I'm branching out more into other musics," said McManus, interviewed the following day in the performers' area, after playing a workshop with De Dannan's Frankie Gavin. "I like mixing and matching, and I'm getting much more seriously into playing a kind of jazz. I'm drawn a lot to musicians who improvise. It's not something I do particularly well, but it fascinates me, and I love working with people who do. With traditional tunes it's great to alter the structures so there's space to



# Tubthumping

completely improvise. The new album is made with Even Vernal on bass, who has a background of straight-ahead jazz. He's an amazing player, and I've learned a lot from him. I'm self-taught in jazz, but I'm feeling my way."

McManus was born in the industrial city of Paisley, near Glasgow in 1965. His parents are both Scottish but his paternal grandparents came from northern Ireland, and he grew up listening to the likes of the Clancy Brothers and the Dubliners on the family stereo.

McManus absorbed everything, but what really fired him was hearing Planxty and the Bothy Band when he was about ten. At the same time he started to play the guitar. "I was self-taught, mainly from listening to recordings," he reveals. "But I occasionally went to Ceoltóirí - an Irish music organization] sessions in Glasgow." McManus' primary inspirations as a guitarist were Ireland's Artie McGlynn, Paul Brady, Donal Lunny, and Andy Irvine, Brittany's Soig Siberil and fellow Scot Dick Gaughan. "In the past 10-12 years Martin Simpson has been a huge influence. Also the late Tony Cuffe from Greenock. He was one of the first to play Scottish tunes fingerstyle - a major revelation to me - and to have a proper sense of ornamentation, which is very important. He died last year, and never got the recognition he deserved."

McManus' first, self-titled, album came out in 1995, and the astonishing fluency of his playing created a stir in Celtic circles. 1998's *Pourquoi Quebec?* was, not surprisingly, recorded in La Belle Province - with Alain Genty, and La Bottine Souriante alumni Denis Fréchette and André Marchand as accompanying musicians. The Quebec connection came via La Bottine, who started making regular visits to Scotland in the '90s. "I'm always listening to French-Canadian music," says McManus. "Right now in reality into the [a capella] album by Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer. I'm trying to arrange some of their tunes for guitar."

There are strong connections elsewhere in the Celtic diaspora for McManus. He loves Breton music and has worked with Siberil, and he's also a fan of Asturian and Galician music (from the north of the Iberian peninsula). "I've played in Asturias a few times. There's a band there, Llan de Cubel, that I've known for years and played with. I've also taught their guitarist, and learned some tunes off them for guitar. I also play occasionally with [Galician bagpiper] José Manuel Budiño and his band. The music isn't traditional but the instrumentation is. I was with them last August at the Festival Interceltique in Lorient [Brittany]."

McManus is happy to venture beyond the diaspora as well, exposing new listeners to Celtic guitar playing. The British Council recently arranged for him to perform at a

[mainly] classical guitar festival in Bogotá, Colombia, and last year he was a guest for the first time at the Chet Atkins Convention in Nashville. "I wasn't influenced by Chet, and I don't know much about that strand of American music. I went and did my own thing, and I guess I stood out like a sore thumb - if you'll excuse the pun. Loads of thumb-pickers congregate in a hotel there for six days. I had a great time, and generated a lot of interest because it's a style of playing they weren't familiar with. So I got an invitation to go back, and now I'm on a Nashville label for North America, Compass Records."

The tuning McManus uses depends on whether his backing or leading, and on the particular style and musical tradition. For accompaniment he uses the 'drop D' tuning - DADGBE. He also favours the familiar DADGAD tuning, a C9th tuning CGCGCD, and - for a few pieces - CGDGC, which he got from Martin Simpson. "It's based on Appalachian banjo tuning," McManus explains. "The top four strings are a 'mountain-minor' tuning. Martin came up with that to transpose frailing banjo tunes for guitar. There's also a very weird pipes-based tuning that I use DAAEAE - which is good fun."

Perhaps McManus' most impressive accomplishment is the way he's managed to transpose the traditional ornamentation used - in Irish and Scottish music in particular - to embellish tunes. It's not easy for a guitarist to execute a perfect roll in the course of a fast-paced reel, let alone to imitate a cran [an Irish piping ornament], as McManus does in his interpretation of the Irish slip jig *An Phis Fluich*. "There's a way of getting the guitar to almost do what an uilleann piper does on the low D," he says. "Basically it involves playing a triplet and a hammer-on and pull-off at the same time. That gives you the da-dara, da-

dara, da-dara triplet thing. There's a similar ornament for the Highland pipes, called a burl. It's mostly a matter of knowing where to put things in a tune. The ornamentation eventually becomes subliminal. You don't consciously do it. It's just the way it comes out."

In addition to promoting *Ceol More*, McManus is embarking on new musical ventures. "I'm putting together a guitar project with Dan Crary and [Italy's] Beppe Gambetta - which I guess will lean more towards bluegrass, another fascinating area for me," he says. "And I've had a notion for a while to do an album of duets with people I haven't otherwise recorded with. That one's still being formulated."

Anglo-Celtic guitar may be a recent tradition, but in the hands of a musician of the calibre of McManus it's already attained an extraordinary degree of maturity.

## Bared Bones

Heather MacLeod blushes at the oddest things, whispers in her own ear, and has a passion for Gordon Lightfoot, 'who proved three chords can take you anywhere.' She's on her way to Thunder Bay and has released a wonderful new disc, *Bones*. Kerry Doole gets the skinny.

Montreal's loss will definitely be Thunder Bay's gain!

We're talking about songstress Heather MacLeod, long a valued fixture on the folk and roots music scene in Montreal. Penguin Eggs interrupted MacLeod's frenzied packing,



Heather MacLeod



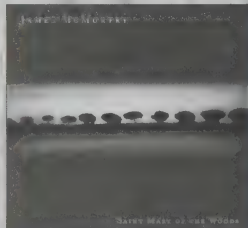
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as she explained, a mite breathlessly: "My big news is that I'm moving to Thunder Bay in three days. CBC Radio has offered me a job as co-host of a programme there."

Thankfully, MacLeod remains dedicated to her music. "I have performance commitments in the fall, so I'll book holidays in advance and tour then. This will be a big change for me. There has been stress in the last few years in juggling enough joe jobs to afford my life and music."

She has a new disc to promote. *Bones* is her third release, following her acclaimed earlier outings, *Funny Thing* (1997) and *Graffiti Love Song* (1999). It is her most focused work to date, and is meeting a positive response.

"*Graffiti Love Song* was ambitious, but it tried to be all things to all people," MacLeod analysis. "I think this one shows maturity. I was really figuring out what my voice was as an arranged singer/songwriter."

Her voice has been compared to that of Nanci Griffith, but with a more muscular tone. Her lyrics are both poetic and precise, and earning a degree in music theory and composition shows in her inventive arrangements.

Thanks to a FACTOR grant, MacLeod was able to recruit producer David Woodhead and record *Bones* in Toronto with some of the country's best roots musicians: drummer Al Cross (Big Sugar), fiddler Anne Lindsay, guitarist Kim Ratcliffe, and multi-instrumentalist Woodhead. Harmony vocals from Rebecca Campbell and Moxy Fruvous' David Matheson add further depth.

"David knew who to bring in and I felt in good hands. The players had all worked a lot together before, and we didn't even spend that much time in the studio. I would explain the story of the song and the feel I wanted. The group would run through it twice, then record, and we often used the first take. Here, I felt I could flourish and not fret, whereas on the last record everyone was a little unsure."

Woodhead's recording space (Woodshed) doubles as home for the model trains he is addicted to. His passion had one drawback, MacLeod laughingly confesses.

"On my song *Evidence Of Sin* [a *Bones* highlight], I had what I thought was a wonderful metaphor of iron rails going through this town and these orphaned kids fenced in by iron rail cribs and windows. Then David pointed out that by the 1890s, train tracks were steel not iron. I did blush about that."

Songwriting comes easily to MacLeod. "I feel like I walk around with a crowd of people all the time. I have a well-populated imagination, and they are all saying things! Sometimes I figure out later that I was whispering in my own ear, and at other times it is something I extrapolated from books. I'm a readaholic."

When it comes to citing figures of influence and inspiration, she reveals impeccable taste.

"Artists whose work I have obsessively

studied are Tom Waits, for his lyrics and characters and unconventional approach to texture, Joni Mitchell, for the risks she takes, Paul Simon, for his remarkable collaborations, Bruce Cockburn, for his approach to the guitar and his willingness to put anger in music without being trite, Gordon Lightfoot, who proved three chords can take you absolutely anywhere, Stan Rogers, who wrote such well-crafted songs, and I love the architecture of Bach." It's no accident that there's a strong Canadian component on that list.

"I am totally nationalistic, so into being Canadian," she enthuses. "My parents are like that too. My stepfather was a draft dodger who fell in love with this country."

MacLeod's hippie-ish parents led a nomadic lifestyle across the country.

"As a child every move is a really big deal so by the time I reached Montreal twelve years ago I would never move again. It was hard to always get oriented to a strange place. When my family moved to Toronto, we banded together and got my parents to sign a contract stating that they wouldn't leave!"

In retrospect, this was good training for a folk singer, as Heather acknowledges.

"It means I feel I belong to the whole country. Plus, when you're always the new person in town, you have to find a way to make out you are someone worth knowing, someone who's interesting. I got good at storytelling."

"We were always part of the new immigrant communities in the bigger cities, then we'd visit family that had been here seven or eight generations. It was a nice contrast. On good days I felt like I was part of everything, on bad days it felt like I was part of nothing."

MacLeod's storytelling skill emerges in both her songs and charming performance style, and that ability will stand her in good stead on the radio.

"My songs aren't funny, but my stories are. When I perform, I tend to have lots of little patter in between. I like to try to get people to laugh. It is very Canadian to tell self-effacing, somewhat embarrassing stories, especially to preface something intimate. My songs are all about things that I fear or worry about or that make me angry. They are all big emotions, it is good to preface them with little emotions."

MacLeod had a major impact on the Montreal scene as an organizer of such popular performance series as Funky-Ass Folk Babes and Hands on Hip Happenings.

"This is a community I feel so tightly connected with, and you don't get a chance to build that again. I'm part of a million networks here, but the music community connection means I already feel welcome in Thunder Bay."

In turn, musicians traversing Canada now have a new ally there. "They all have to go through Thunder Bay as they tour the country. I can talk about that on the radio, and that really excites me!"



# Tubthumping

## Jokers Wild

Entourloupe take their name from an old Quebec word meaning a practical joke. Their vibrant, traditional French-Canadian music will make you smile, guarantees our Richard Thornley.

Entourloupe are one of several Quebecois bands making their way out west with increasing frequency.

Recently playing a mix of traditional Quebecois songs and tunes, the group enjoyed 2000 prairie folk dancing and clapping with abandon at a Sunday session at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival. The following evening, they were equally at home in a friend's living room playing to a handful of entranced kids and adults.

Entourloupe was founded in 1993 by Paul Marchand (guitar, vocals, feet), Éric Favreau (fiddle, piano, vocals) and Daniel Roy. Following Roy's departure they were joined by Stéphane Landry (accordion, feet) and Claude Méthé (fiddle, mandola, vocals). Most recently they have been performing with Jean-François Berthiaume, a gifted young step dancer and caller, who also contributes tambour à mailloches (bodhran) and suitcase percussion.

Each member has plenty of experience outside the group: Paul, and Claude were part of Manigance; Éric has a solo album from 1992 and a duo album with fiddler Mario Landry from 1999; Paul and Stéphane recently played on Laurie Hart's *Danse Ce Soir* disc; Jean-François is very well known as a dancer, teacher, and caller; and Claude has been in a number of groups including Dent-De-Lion (with his wife, Dana Whittle), Ni Sarpe Ni Branche, and Le Réve du Diable.

As you might expect given such a pedigree, Entourloupe's performances are of the highest order and they are as deserving of wider acclaim as another better-known Quebecois group, even without a brass band in tow. Perhaps the ball has started rolling though, as they were recently invited to appear on A Prairie Home Companion after one of the show's producers caught an Entourloupe performance.

The group's name is an old word meaning a practical joke, potentially a bad one as the word is used in France, but apparently without that connotation in Quebec. And yes, Entourloupe have a wry sense of humour, they laugh lots, and their music will make you smile, even if your French is as rusty as mine.



Entourloupe

Their first album, *La St-Berondaine*, was released in 1997 on the Milles-Pattes label, although it is now unfortunately out of print. Their second, *Les Choux Pis Des Melons* (*Cabbages and Melons*), came out last year on Minuit Dans La Cuisine.

Much of Entourloupe's music is sourced from living fiddlers and accordion players, old recordings, and archives. Éric in particular is a specialist in collecting music and trawling through archives in Quebec. *Là-bas en haut* is one example from *Les Choux Pis Des Melons* that he excavated from the archives of Laval University. Do they feel pressure to evolve, to adopt more modern elements into the music?

"We don't get that pressure to add drums and bass and things," says Claude. "A lot of people do and they are free to do it. I'm not against anything, but there is a kind of respect to the tradition and when it gets too far it's hard to call yourself traditional."

While this respect is manifest in everything about the band, they also introduce their own compositions and some non-traditional elements into their repertoire. *L'ange aux patins* is a haunting fiddle tune that Claude composed after awaking from a dream in which a small angel skated on a frozen river. Paul, Stéphane, and Éric also contribute tunes to the group's recordings, and we can only hope for a dance solo or two from Jean-François on the next album. Musically their palette includes the tambour à mailloches (bodhran), mandola, and reportedly, cello on the next album.

I ask what it means to modern audiences to hear fresh presentations of this, sometimes very old, music?

"It's a music that you don't need a big, big set-up to do it and appreciate it, you can do it in your own kitchen and have a great time with friends. It's to see the guy singing the

song. When you see it in the context of the party, you have to see those parties in Quebec and you will understand more about the appeal of it. Joie de vivre and a lot of spontaneity in the music," says Claude. He also suggests that, as in the case of square or contra dancing which allows more of a connection between dancers, the same may be true of the music—songs and tunes celebrating the everyday pleasures and sorrows of our lives. Connection, community, and a good time.

Interestingly, Entourloupe say that they play more frequently outside Quebec than they do inside. What is it about this music that makes it so appealing to non-Francophone audiences?

"It's the liveliness," says Claude. "We have a great dancer, and if you don't understand the words you understand the energy of the steps and the music. We have good musicians to back the steps, non?"

He laughs. And that pretty well sums it up.



Photo: Frank Gasparik

Jean-François



## General Gordon

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The prolific and versatile, James Gordon has gone about his business of songwriting for over 25 years with a passion and intelligence that is rare in this country. 'It all starts with the songs,' he tells Les Siemieniuk

Remember the movie *Even Cowgirls get the Blues*? In that terrible adaptation of Tom Robbins' novel, Uma Thurman was particularly adept at hitchhiking because she had enormous thumbs. To do a thumbnail sketch of James Gordon's career, you have to rely on thumbs the size of Thurman's.

But here goes: actor, writer, director, producer, festival artistic director, symphonic composer, radio host, resident songwriter on CBC's *Basic Black* and *Ontario Morning*. But most of all James Gordon is a very talented and prolific writer of folk songs. The proof? Twelve solo albums (including his latest, the wonderful *One Timeless Moment*), fourteen with Tamarack, three for children and three with David Archibald in a career that spans over 25 years.

He was constantly playing music as a child and in bands since his teens. Was there a defining moment when he decided to make music a career? Gordon says it just snuck up on him: "One day, during university, I noticed my calendar was filled with gigs and I was doing music for a living".

Although he started composing classical and opera, Gordon began his folk music journey as a banjo player and group minder with the folk-

loric revue *Maple Sugar* from 1975-1980. *Maple Sugar* featured Graham Townsend on fiddle and Gilles Losier on piano and keyboards among others.

"A manager just set up this revue of real Canadian folk music and would fill it with musicians from the lumber camps of Quebec and Ontario. I was hired to play banjo and keep an eye on the guys and get them out of the bars". They were playing good gigs — "big halls and embassy stuff." But it was after the gig and into the night when the *Maple Sugar* boys would play in the hotel rooms that he discovered his love of Canadian folk music.

"I was hearing and playing all these wonderful songs every night that gave meaning and identity to these people's lives and my friends weren't aware these songs existed".

Since then he has been in the forefront of writing about this country and his travels across it. Songs such as *Mining For Gold*, *Harvest Train*, *Frobisher Bay*, *Fields of Rock and Snow*, *Back Before Wal-Mart*, and *Lonesome Cowboy's Lament*, stand shoulder to shoulder with the best. With *Tamarack*, he found a 20-year vehicle for his songs, "That gave people a sense of place".

But the sense of place of Canada and North America is dictated by geography and geography plays havoc with the touring musicians life. "The most economical way of touring is to go out for six or seven weeks at a time and *Tamarack* did that".

But after 20 years, he was fulfilled, tired, and wanted more time at home. Plus there all these side projects he had done — more were offered and he wanted to see them through.

He is immensely proud of his work with *Tamarack* and since they are still going strong, he comments that perhaps it was a good thing that he left because "I sort of hogged songs on



James Gordon

## Tubthumping

the albums. I'd always come in and say I've written this song and we have to put it on the album. But with Alex [Sinclair], he was shy, we'd have to say, come on Alex you must have a song for the album. So my leaving gave Alex a break from that".

So now he goes out on the road for ten days at the most and has that time with the family. You still have to tour, "It's the most economical form of advertising – for my recordings and for the songs. In the end it's all about the songs."

They have lives of their own and go out there and return things back to him. Monetarily and intangibly. In fact, in discussing his songs, some have proven to be more successful than others. The presciently titled *Mining for Gold* was included on the Cowboy Junkies first and best-selling album. That led to its use in a local California Nike commercial which provided James with another healthy cheque. "If I had been asked to pick which song of all the ones I have written to be my "commercial" song it wouldn't have been that one"

Yet James values as highly the songs some people have called disposable – the songs about goofy things from the listeners of Basic Black or from his writing about Ontario communities. These songs may only be performed once in a specific location but they do provide the audience that night with a sense of pride in their place and a momentary diversion from real life. What more should one ask of a song?

When Gordon's kids were young, in the mid-eighties, he wrote and recorded successful children's albums that sold over 50,000 copies. But he lost interest as his children grew older. But not writing kids songs doesn't equate with not being interested in children and the importance of exposing them to music. As music seemingly is disappearing from school curricula, Gordon currently could fill his calendar with school song-writing workshops he does with his new musical partner, Sandy Horne. He passes on his love of music, provides a role model, as does Sandy for the girls. Once a month is all he can handle but it's an important part of his career.

James Gordon is a national treasure. He has just gone about his business of songwriting for over 25 years, with a passion and intelligence that is rare in this country. I was the CBC radio music producer in Calgary for over 18 years. Budding young songwriters would ask me what they should do to have a career in the music business. More often than not, my advice to them was – don't worry about record deals and what's in fashion. Be like James Gordon – just write songs and go out and just do it. As James says, "It all starts with the songs." And, in the end, the songs will take care of themselves and you.



Vin Garbutt

## The World According to Garbutt

Veteran British folk singer Vin Garbutt offers some savvy advice for the novice folk singer and song collector. 'A true folkie can listen to bad singers and hear a good song. Trust your own ear,' He tells Tim Readman.

Singer, songwriter, raconteur and one of the funniest people on the planet, Vin Garbutt has never been interested in becoming a big star in the accepted sense. His success has happened without hype from record companies, and without publicity from the mass media. He has performed all over the globe, and in parts of countries that the biggest stars will never see. Who better then to answer questions about the past, present and future of the music we all love so dearly? A casual chat over a cup of tea in my front room in Vancouver, BC during one of his regular Canadian tours revealed a deep-knowledge of the development of the folk scene in Britain and well beyond.

**The Past:** In the 1950's and 1960's in England, folk clubs boomed fuelled by the skiffle craze and the burgeoning popularity of American folk music. Material by artists such as Bob Dylan and Peter Paul and Mary was predominant in the English folk clubs and in the media. Other artists who had been researching and performing traditional British material such as Johnny Handell, Shirley Collins, and Alex Campbell, however, gradually came to the forefront. Vin Garbutt worked at his craft until he joined their ranks.

"Folk singers have a long apprenticeship. It is great to play for nowt and kip on floors

because you are doing what you love. Then you make it on to the sofa. When you can earn \$250 a night then you have reached the 'bed barrier'. You get enough respect to get a bed for the night."

He saw he could earn a better living from what was at the time his hobby rather than continuing to work in a chemical plant. He played his first concert supporting The Watsons at Middlesbrough Little Theatre in the mid sixties. Along with Billy Connelly, Tony Rose, Christie Moore, Martin Carthy et al he enjoyed the thriving folk scene where every village had a club and he could tour in one area for days using the local bus service (he still doesn't drive).

He and his peers dipped into folk song collections such as the Child ballads and discovered a wealth of material which they helped bring from obscurity into the growing canon of well-known folk songs. It was not uncommon to see Vin alongside Martin Carthy and Steeleye Span's Peter Knight and Bob Johnson rummaging through the books and field recordings in London's Cecil Sharpe House looking for fresh material. At the same time writers like Graham Miles on Teeside were adding to this living tradition by writing new folk songs in a traditional style.

"I picked me Mam's brains about bits of Irish ballads she remembered. I bought old 19th century leather bound books like the 'Complete Works of Robbie Burns' looking for songs. I hitch hiked to Ireland a few times looking for my own musical roots."

All this time the media were focused on the London area at the expense of the other regions. Vin however was establishing a gen-



# Tubthumping

uine and devoted grass roots following. His audience grew through word of mouth and personal recommendation. Throughout the 80's his popularity grew until he no longer had to look for work – it was coming to him.

**The present:** Now Vin is at the top of his craft and his date book is always full.

"I reckon with the average pop star there are more people who've heard of them than heard them perform. Huge numbers have actually heard me perform but most people have never heard of me through the media. That makes it good and solid. People always come back and that ensures good audiences."

He does however express some reservations about the current state of folk music. He identifies the emergence of an axis of power in folk music including certain folk magazines, radio and TV, awards shows, record labels, and distributors which is putting a stranglehold on the scene. He believes that this 'cartel' has a monopoly and is only promoting a narrow representation of what is out there.

"Performers can't get out of their regions unless they get access to the media. If it becomes exclusive we miss out by going for image and what is sellable. They have to get past thinking, 'We've read about her so we'll write about her.'"

**The future:** Vin firmly believes that the key to the continuing health of the folk scene is centred around choice of material. When asked about the current crop of UK folk artists,

"I hope they can keep coming up with the songs and not just recycle the 60's LP's."

There's nowt wrong with that 'cos they are singing to a generation that never heard the songs but it just feels like it's cheating a bit. In the 60's we introduced the folk scene to so many songs that nobody had heard before."

He advises emerging folk singers to write their own songs, to look back to the traditional sources and find unheard material. As an artist who has recorded a lot of songs by unknown amateur folksingers he actively encourages people to get out to their local folk clubs and listen for good songs.

"If you are an exceptional singer you can get away with singing anything 'cos you are going to sing it better than anybody else. I'm more likely to go for the song than the voice. A true folkie can listen to bad singers and hear a good song. Trust your own ear. Listen to your friends who write, go to your local folk club. Cover what you want but don't make a copy of a copy."

Sound advice indeed.

# Guitar Gurus

Daniel Heikalo and Gordon Quinton, two talented guitarists from Atlantic Canada, eke out a living with small cottage industries based on their impressive talents.

They deserve a higher profile. writes our Paul-Emile Comeau

Acoustic guitarists playing solo folk-based material didn't catch on in Canada till the Seventies, and even then it was mostly limited to the west. Two notable pioneers of the genre who honed their craft in Eastern Canada well over two decades ago, but who remain unknown beyond their community to an almost scandalous degree, are Daniel Heikalo and Gordon Quinton.

Daniel Heikalo was brought up in Montreal where there were very few (if any) role models for the type of guitar music to which he would be devoting much of his life. He began playing both fingerstyle and classical guitar while in his teens and soon began experimenting with

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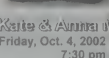
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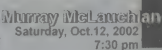
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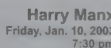
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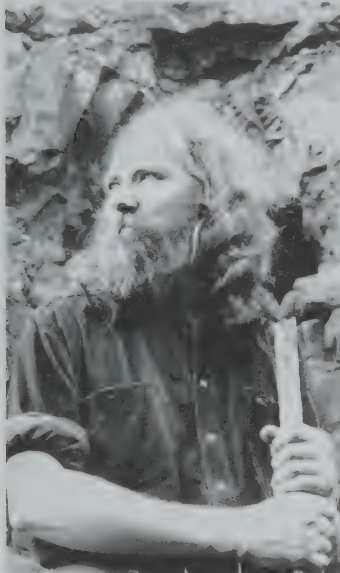
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# Tubthumping



Daniel Heikalo

open tunings. Heikalo credits John Fahey as an influence, but also Frank Zappa, Jorma Jaukonen, Bert Jansch, Oregon, and Conventum.

Heikalo has always had a strong folk streak running through much of what he plays, but he was always keenly interested in world music as well. In his own words, "From an early age, I enjoyed music from around the world, listening to the ethnic station in Montreal, and to shortwave radio."

Heikalo also developed an interest in the avant-garde. "I also remember playing the shortwave radio by touching the antenna, literally fingerpicking it, creating very odd electronic sounds."

He also enjoyed listening to the noises between stations and to such things as solar winds, satellite communication, and morse code. To this day he still works in musique concrète and electroacoustic music.

In the early Eighties Heikalo moved to the Wolfville region of the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia. Over the course of the next few years a few rave reviews of his cassettes appeared in the U.S. press. The influential Option Magazine described him as "one of the world's great guitarists," but Heikalo kept a low profile. He reappeared in 1993 with *Thoughts for My Father*, his debut CD (and one that he recently re-released in a remastered version) which consisted of intricate and elegant compositions for solo guitar and cittern. In the years 2000-2001 Heikalo released four more CDs, including an avant-garde duet

album with Arthur Bull on the Ambiances Magnétiques label from Montreal. A few more are on the way, including a revised and improved CD version of a cassette called *L'Espoir*, which consists of lyrical pieces in the same vein as *Thoughts for My Father*.

Heikalo describes his style as "often finger-style-based and having evolved from classical, ragtime and country-blues/Fahey styles" into which he also incorporates Appalachian frailing/clawhammer techniques. On *Eagles' Paradise*, which is subtitled *The Cittern Project*, Heikalo makes impressive use of unusual tunings and minor scales and also plays the instrument (a double-stringed, long-necked lute) with a slide. On *The Art of the Prepared Guitar*, Heikalo uses unusual techniques such as slapping the strings, or fastening objects to them. Unlike avant-garde practitioners of prepared guitar, he does much of this with a touch of humor while retaining a strong folk/blues and middle eastern sound.

In concert Heikalo also plays the Moroccan recorder and percussion instruments. Within the last few years Heikalo has been playing New Music festivals but has had less success in the folk realm, although he played the Winnipeg and Lunenburg Folk Festivals some years ago. Eastern Canada offers opportunities for even mediocre singer-songwriters but gigs for an original solo instrumentalist seem to be more limited. Heikalo, who is also a photographer and a writer of surrealist poetry in French, looks after every aspect of his recordings and earns a living by teaching, doing the occasional mostly out of province gig, operating a home studio, and providing sound designs and scores for theatre companies. Tamara Thiebaut, his wife, is also an impressive artist specializing in whimsical themes.

Daniel Heikalo and Gordon Quinton don't know each other but they have much in common, having both included a tribute to Bruce Cockburn as an influence on each of their debut albums. Their playing styles may be different but, like Heikalo, Quinton is a guitarist who ekes out a living with a small cottage industry based on his impressive talent.

Gordon Quinton is a self-taught musician who was brought up in Windsor, Newfoundland, in the 1950s by parents who, in his words, "played fiddle and pump organ, but I was soon drawn to flat-picking guitar after hearing such guitarists as Hank Snow, Red Shea (of Gordon Lightfoot fame), and Lenny Breau." Quinton has been living in St. John's since the late Sixties, which is where he joined Ward Six, a band that recorded an album for the Cynda/Boot label in 1971. John Lacey, another guitarist in the group, backed up Quinton on his first three albums. *Guitar Songs*, Quinton's first album for the small

Quay label in 1979, consisted of original tunes, famous melodies, and Newfoundland jigs. It's the latter repertoire that made him unique since no one else was doing anything comparable.

In 1982 Quinton released *Woodnight Moon* on Pigeon Inlet, a local folk label, and this album focused mostly on traditional Irish material. The title of that album became the name of Quinton's own label, one on which he released his four subsequent albums, the first two on vinyl, the most recent two on CD. *Wildwood Flower*, from 1986, consisted primarily of him flat picking and finger picking country standards as well as a few traditional tunes. The next two were called *Sea-Winds* (1988) and *North Atlantic Dance* (1996) and consisted of his own impressionistic compositions played solo.

*Molly Bawn: A Guitar Memoir*, which came out in 2001, features Quinton's early style as well as his later free-style playing on such material as *The Squid-Jigging Ground*, *She's Like the Swallow*, and other local tunes. *St. Anne's Reel*, which he had flat-picked on his second album, is played here finger-picking style. Quinton's albums have beautiful covers, with two of them featuring paintings by Gerald Squires and Molly Bawn, featuring a photo of a small coastal village. Regrettably, only Quinton's three most recent albums are available at this time and very little of either Quinton's or Heikalo's music is heard or readily available beyond parts of their respective provinces. They both deserve a higher profile.



Gordon Quinton



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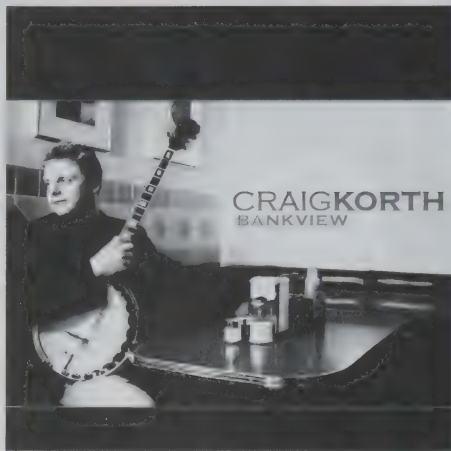
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Dan Bern

# The Dog's Bollocks

Dan Bern's obsessed with Britney Spears Ani DiFranco's his pal. Billy Bragg and Rory McLeod provide him with inspiration. And he talks to God on a regular basis. Nobody writes songs quite like Bern's, figures Roddy Campbell

Apparently, Dan Bern has big balls. *Big as grapefruits. Big as pumpkins. Yes sir. And on on my really good days they swell to the size of small dogs...* Or so he sings on his hilariously preposterous, show stopper, *Tiger Woods*.

Master of the monumental statement – '*I am the Messiah*' – Bern is the most outrageously gifted and audacious songwriter to emerge from the US folk circuit since his pal Ani DiFranco, who, incidentally, produced his 1998 breakthrough disc, *Fifty Eggs*. With a razor wit and an intuitive, discerning view of the world, Bern squeezes more raw imagery from his free-wheeling verses than anyone west of Rory McLeod. They play tennis together, actually. Honest.

As comical as Bern is topical, his songs are as provocative and brash as they are sensitive and humorous. In front of live audiences – predominantly young too, heavens to Betsy – he shifts topics effortlessly from *Talkin' Al-Qaeda Blues* – about America's increasing paranoia with terrorists under every bed – to frank talks with God and his Boy. *One Real Thing*, runs: *Jesus, he comes up to me, Jesus*

*he sits down, Says take this fuckin' cross off my back, I'm goin' downtown, I said aw, but ain't that your uniform, he offers me a toke, says 2000 years is long enough for this particular joke.* His ongoing infatuation with religious icons though, he can't fully explain.

"I almost don't want to," says Bern backstage at a late July gig in Edmonton. "My parent's weren't religious. I think my mom's an atheist. My dad was a pretty spiritual guy, not in any dogmatic sense, but in a large sense. I think he talked about God; I think he felt it. I think I feel it in that way. It's something to do with solitude, solitude and relating to the outside world – the natural world – the clouds, the trees, the ocean. I think it's good to talk to God in whatever way one does. I think it's probably a metaphor for one feeling connected to things. I'm fine with it being a metaphor in the same way that ants probably have a very limited perception of our world, I think that we probably have a very limited perception of the spiritual world, but I think we sense it."

Do you talk to God on a regular basis?

"I think in some way I do. I think if I go too long without then I start feeling like I'm out of touch."

Pop personalities too turn up in his songs like babies after blackouts: Marilyn Monroe, Marilyn Manson, Kurt Cobain, Keith Richards – he's even written *Talkin' Woody, Bob, Bruce, Dan Blues* – an hilarious spoof of Bern dropping in to pay his respects to Bruce Springsteen, much in the same manner Bob Dylan initially visited Woody Guthrie in a

New York hospital.

"We get bombarded with popular culture and its figures. They're kind of our Greek gods, really. Everybody has a relationship with them – most never meeting them in person, never even seeing them. So they're these touchstones, and they make great characters... Everybody's obsessed with Britney Spears. So I am too. I'll use her as a character"

Dan Bern's challenging, idiosyncratic and frequently ribald sense of humour he inherited in part from his father. But it also developed as a means to grab attention as a kid not particularly adept at tossing a baseball around a small rural Iowa town. He refined it through Marx Brothers movies, James Thurber's books and Lenny Bruce's skits. Bern also discovered Dylan, Phil Ochs and, in particular, Woody Guthrie, just as a growing political awareness took root. His shrewd sense of social injustice though, grew from the tragic events surrounding his parents experiences leading up to and during World War II Europe.

"My dad lost almost his entire family when the Nazis came into Lithuania. My mom was born in Germany and was a refugee, and told me about Kristallnacht, you know, witnessing it – going to the synagogue to practice the organ and meeting a friend in the street who said, 'Go home. The synagogue's burning down.' So you grow up with that and you can't help but feel there's a little more. I grew up in Iowa which was very peaceful, sedate, and calm, and sweet. But I guess I was aware that there was this non-sweet side to things too, and that it's important in my own realm – I can't fight the Nazis but I can be aware of injustice, and look for it, and call it out if I see it. And suddenly I had a form to do that."

Comparisons to Bob Dylan and Elvis Costello frequently abound. They'll be flattered. Whatever, the Bernstein's met in Palestine, emigrated to America where they settled in Mount Vernon, Iowa, and raised Dan and his sister, Jennifer. His father was a concert pianist and composer, his mother a classical singer and poet. Young Dan started out on cello but never really took a shine to it.

"I played it for eight years but never very well... It's kind of a solitary exercise. The cello is just not that much fun. It's not something you play and sing songs to naturally. I think I always made up songs and so at some point I figured out a guitar might be a better call. I was about 14 when I started with guitar."

"I was kind of a loner type so my first instinct, when I wanted to play music myself, was not to form a band, it was, 'I'll get a guitar.' And so the great singers and writers who played by themselves with a guitar are the ones you start to gravitate towards."

Eventually he left Mount Vernon for Chicago and finally chose to settle in Los Angeles in 1990 rather than New York. The Big Apple, he found too intimidating. The specter of Dylan, Springsteen and Lou Reed



haunted every street corner. In California, he polished his fledgling songs on the coffee house circuit, sometimes sharing open mics with Beck, and gradually opening for such diverse performers as Utah Phillips and Warren Zevon. And in 1991, he met his mentor, producer and engineer Chuck Plotkin, whose credits include all the major Springsteen recordings as well as several Dylan discs. Plotkin would produce all of Bern's releases except, *Fifty Eggs*.

"I'd known him and been working for him two, three, years before my first record (*Dog Boy Van*, 1996). I was playing a little club in LA, and somebody from his company heard me one night and had him come down the next day. He had been working on a record with somebody else at A&M. He had me come in the next night and just play a bunch of songs. We've been kinda tight ever since. Before he was just a name on the Bruce records. He's the smartest guy I know in music. There are times when he's the only person I can talk to about certain things – about songs and approach"

The self titled Dan Bern was released by Sony subsidiary, Work, in 1997. *Fifty Eggs* followed a year later, only this time around Ani DiFranco handled production duties. "Virtually quotable in its entirety, *Fifty Eggs* is the most refreshing and challenging disc released this year," wrote yer man from Penguin Eggs, me.

Surely Ani proves a constant unflappable source of inspiration?

"That independent, do it yourself thing is a part of who she is. I'm not as caught up in that as everybody else. For me the inspiring part is the artist, the writer, the performer, the spirit. I met her at a folk fest at Clearwater, which is out in New York, several years ago. And then I opened a bunch of shows for her after that, and made the record. I went two or three years without really seeing her and then she popped up in New Orleans and I did a bunch more openers this past spring. Her and Billy Bragg, Rory McLeod, those people are inspiring."

But Sony folded Work, grabbed Jennifer Lopez, Fiona Apple, Jamiroquai – the big sellers – and cut everybody else loose. "It was tough because the two guys that were in Work were good guys, and they believed in me. And they got the axe themselves."

Out of Work, Bern regrouped and released the equally hilarious and topical double disc *Smartie Mine* in 1999 and sold it over the Internet. *New American Language* came out in 2001 on the small independent label, Messenger Records. Like *Smartie Mine*, it has Canadian distribution through Vancouver's Festival Records. While less provocative than its predecessors, *New American Language* still features Bern's typical web of words – mirth and mayhem aplenty.

"It's kind of a stream of consciousness, I

*"For me the inspiring part is the artist, the writer, the performer, the spirit."* – Dan Bern on Ani DiFranco

guess. It's kind of like, the ideas – what you want to say – drive the structure instead of the other way around. I think over time you start to develop some sort of trust in the internal workings even if it doesn't make literal sense. I remember when I wrote *Hannibal* (for *Dog Boy Van*), I had no idea what it meant, or what it was about, or what might hold it together. But I liked the sound of it, and I liked the feel of it, and I liked where the words fell. I think later, not in any definitive way, not in any way I could clearly define, it started to make sense, and there seemed to be culminations in the song that sort of brought stuff that happened early in the song back around to the end. But if I had set out with some clear idea, I don't think it would have been as good.

"A lot of the stuff is just stuff you hear, you know. Arlo Guthrie talked about fishing for songs. That was the analogy he used. He made a joke about it and said, 'Bob Dylan was always up stream. He caught the bigger ones.' You know if you've got your line in the water for songs, then I suppose you start filtering things in that way."

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Photo: Angela Browne

Ron Sexsmith

## Daydream Believer

Soft-spoken and unassuming, Ron Sexsmith's fans include Elton John, Paul McCartney and Elton John. Just don't mention Elvis Costello. *Cobblestone Runway*, Sexsmith's latest recording may yet make him a household name. Peering into the crystal ball, David Howell.

A glimpse into a Ron Sexsmith daydream: he quietly yearns to perform before a full house at Toronto's Massey Hall, the 2,750 seat grande dame of Canadian concert venues.

"That's a dream of mine, and I don't think it's that much of a stretch," says the shy and deceptively boyish singer-songwriter. "I've played to about a thousand people in Toronto before, at my own shows."

Sexsmith, 38, is on the verge of releasing the album he believes could put him into the biggest soft-seaters. *Cobblestone Runway*, recorded in England with Swedish producer Martin Terefe, is set for an early October release on the Linus Entertainment label. Nettwerk America will release it in the United States and in other markets worldwide. He'll tour in support of the new album for six months, maybe more.

Sexsmith, who speaks as candidly as he sings, is convinced his fifth major-label album is the best album he's made, the record that could be his long-awaited breakthrough.

And if any hard-working Canadian songwriter deserves a big commercial break, he's the guy. His gorgeous melodies, eloquent lyrics and heartfelt performances have earned him critical acclaim for the better part of a decade; he has been praised by songwriting luminaries Paul McCartney, Elton John, John Hiatt and, most famously, Elvis Costello. "Sometimes it's a bit embarrassing," Sexsmith says, "because I don't think I've ever done an interview or seen an article where Elvis's name isn't mentioned."

Sexsmith's career has been a slow, steady build. He got his start as a "human jukebox" playing covers in the bars of St. Catharines, Ontario, then moved to Toronto in the late '80s to sing his own songs. One-time Blue Rodeo keyboardist Bobby Wiseman produced Sexsmith's indie debut, *Grand Opera Lane*, which led to a publishing deal, which in turn led to Interscope Records. Interscope released his first three major-label recordings, starting with 1995's *Ron Sexsmith* — the one Elvis loved so much.

Yet the performer remains somehow just out of the limelight. Sexsmith's is not a household name, even in his home country. He's had to watch patiently as other current singer-songwriters have hit it big — fellow Canadian Rufus Wainwright and Britain's David Gray to name but two.

He is always soft-spoken and unassuming, but it becomes clear when talking to Sexsmith about his career that he craves that kind of recognition for his own body of work. Which

is why he imagines himself in the glare of a Massey Hall spotlight, and why he believes *Cobblestone Runway* just might put him there.

"I'm proud of all my albums, and there's not a single song that I couldn't play you now," he says, relaxing in a city park after performing at this year's Edmonton Folk Music Festival, where he performed a solo concert and joined Janis Ian onstage in a workshop session.

"All my records have got things about them that I wish I could have done differently — I could have sung it better, or maybe there's a production choice that wasn't right. I think this record is the closest I've got to succeeding in all these areas — the right song, the right production, and hopefully now the right label, all that stuff. Whatever record I'm working on, that's what I'm excited about. But with this one, I've just got a good feeling."

He calls *Cobblestone Runway* a Sunday morning kind of record. Others will call it a complex, mature recording — melancholy yet uplifting, contemporary yet faithful to the singer-songwriter tradition of finding universal truths in personal experience.

Repeat listenings to an advance copy reveal it to be a return to more familiar turf after 2001's energetic but awkward *Blue Boy*, which was also on the Linus Entertainment label. Previous Sexsmith recordings had always showcased his soft and sensitive side; *Blue Boy*, with alt-country icon Steve Earle in the producer's chair, hid its most poignant moments inside a rougher overall context.

*Blue Boy* "felt a bit clumsy," Sexsmith concedes. "We did it so fast, we were all rocking out, no pre-production or anything." The album featured some of Sexsmith's strongest writing, especially the achingly beautiful *Foolproof*, yet it met with mixed reactions. In England and Sweden, it was treated "like the ugly stepchild of all my other records."

(Sexsmith keeps tabs on what people are saying about him, regularly exchanging e-mail with fans and reading what they're telling each other about him in Internet news groups.)

For *Cobblestone Runway* — he dreamed up the term years ago after a rough landing at Heathrow Airport — his first choice for producer was Terefe. They first met when Sexsmith was recording a duet with the young English singer-songwriter Shea Seger for her album, *The May Street Project*, which Terefe was producing.

Sexsmith, a huge Kinks fan, later teamed up with Terefe to record *This Is Where I Belong*, the title track for this year's star-studded Ray Davies tribute album, released on the Ryko label.

During a short break in a European tour, Sexsmith again met up with Terefe, this time to start recording *Cobblestone Runway*. In five days, they laid down vocal and guitar tracks for 14 new songs. Terefe specifically challenged Sexsmith to get the most out of his dis-

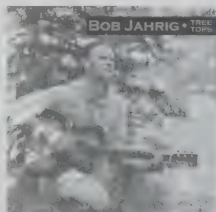


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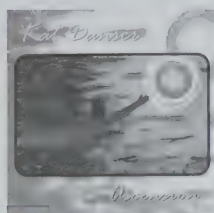
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### Saturday October 5, 2002

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### Friday October 11, 2002

#### Ann Vriend with the Dropouts Special Guests: The Al Brant Trio

### Saturday October 19, 2002

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tinctive voice. Previous producers Earle, and the team of Mitchell Froom and Tchad Blake, with whom Sexsmith recorded 1997's *Other Songs* and 1999's *Whereabouts*, had been more concerned about the overall vibe and less concerned with the mechanics of singing on key.

"They're great producers, but they're not necessarily vocal producers," the singer says. "Martin was more listening for that side of things. He would call me on stuff. He would say, 'Why don't you do this one again? Be sure you're happy with it, so it won't bug you later on.' Maybe there will be stuff that bugs me later on, but at the moment, I think it's probably my most accurate singing."

After recording the basic tracks, Sexsmith resumed his tour, leaving Terefe free rein to add more instrumentation where he wanted. "With Martin I was in good hands. And I knew that when I left the songs, there wasn't much he could do to wreck them."

Terefe's production highlights Sexsmith's biggest asset, his supple, expressive voice. But some of the finished tunes shocked the singer. Sexsmith hadn't anticipated Terefe adding a disco bass line to *Dragonfly on Bay Street*, or the electronic blips that now liven up *For a Moment*. But the biggest surprise came on the piano-and-strings ballad *Gold In Them Hills*, which has already been used in the TV series *Queer as Folk*.

Without consulting Sexsmith, Terefe invited

Chris Martin, lead singer for hot British rock band Coldplay, to sing on it. Then Terefe removed Sexsmith's vocal on the song's second verse and replaced it with Martin's voice. "I was kind of upset about it," Sexsmith says. "It's kind of like if you're listening to a Bob Dylan record and all of a sudden Bono comes in and starts singing a verse."

Sexsmith understands the music business, and he knew that any association with a buzz band like Coldplay could only help his album sales — he could probably picture the "Featuring Coldplay's Chris Martin" stickers added to the CDs — but he had to stand his ground. So *Cobblestone Runway* will have *Gold In Them Hills* the way Sexsmith intended, and a bonus remix featuring Martin that may become a radio single.

*Former Glory*, which opens the album, was written partly about Sexsmith's separation two years ago from his longtime commonlaw partner, with whom he shares two teenage children. But while Sexsmith was touring with Lucinda Williams in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, audiences eagerly found a deeper meaning in the song's quietly hopeful theme.

A more overt political song on the new album is *God Loves Everyone*, a spiritual lesson dressed in the comforting cloak of a lullaby. Sexsmith sings of an all-loving deity who welcomes atheists, gays, even death-row

inmates into his arms. The inspiration came from the brutal 1998 hate-crime murder of gay Wyoming university student Matthew Shepard. Sexsmith was sickened by news stories of protesters disrupting Shepard's funeral with signs saying No Fags in Heaven and No Tears for Queers.

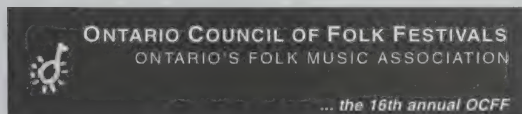
"It was almost more horrible than the crime itself, the things that some people were saying. It's always rubbed me the wrong way when people try to claim God, or heaven, as their own, as if it was some kind of private club. I hope the song doesn't offend anybody. It may."

The best purely musical moment on *Cobblestone Runway* may be the spectacular chorus to *The Least That I Can Do*, where a gospel choir and a Nashville-style piano flourish carry Sexsmith's voice off somewhere heavenward.

"Every record I've done, we always try to do something different," Sexsmith says. "But even this album basically comes down to my voice and the way I play the guitar."

"I think this is a prettier album, more of a graceful sounding record. I think it's a Sunday morning kind of record. You put it on, it's not going to jar you, but hopefully it's going to move people."

"There are a few sad songs on it, but I just think the way I sing maybe paints it a little more sad sometimes."



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Photo: Frank Gasparik

Steve Dawson and Jesse Zubot

## String Driven Thing

David Grissman created 'Dawg' music. Bela Fleck came up with 'Blu-bop'. And Jesse Zubot and Steve Dawson make 'Strang.' All three offer(ed) thrilling variants of acoustic roots laced with jazz. Vancouver-based Zubot and Dawson spread their wings on their new recording, *Chicken Scratch*, by adding the spooky vocals of Kelly Joe Phelps. Roddy Campbell digs in the dirt.

Jesse Zubot came from another planet. Or so thought Steve Dawson when they first met in 1993. Zubot, for his part, reckoned Dawson had a bit of the alien about him too. He finger picked slide guitar for god's sakes!

They would soon sleep in crack houses and on beaches, nurture a daily diet of piazzas and burritos, play their debut gig as a duo opening for Gregg Allman, and earn a Juno nomination at their very first attempt for a record they never really expected anyone to like. They're a different kettle of cod alright that Zubot and Dawson. And undeniably two of the most talented instrumentalists in the country.

It's mad to compare them to anyone else, of course. But we all do it, don't we. And so

names such as Stephane Grappelli, David Grissman and Bela Fleck might offer appropriate directions in a search for common ground. Primed with essentially an acoustic arsenal of fiddle, mandolin and various resonating and acoustic guitars, there's no denying the joyful individuality and twisted sense of adventure that springs from such colorful instrumental tunes as their *My Fish Can Swing*, *Chicken-Fried Head* or *The Swagging Dragon*.

Bernie Fincklestein, that Eastern arbiter of good taste, recently saw fit to sign them to True North Records and will release their third album, *Chicken Scratch*, this fall. Slide guitar maestro Kelly Joe Phelps makes a guest appearance. And for the first time, Zubot and Dawson recruited an outside producer – American Lee Townsend, no less. His impressive list of credits includes jazz guitar giants, Bill Frizzell, John Scofield and Pat Metheny. So lads, did you abduct Townsend, or what? Conference call chuckles from Vancouver.

Steve: "I just e-mailed him. I said, 'Hey, how's it going? We're big fans of yours; we're a recording act from Canada. We want to do a new album and we would like you to consider producing it.' And he went, 'Hey, that sounds like fun.' So we sent him down our stuff and he really liked our last album (*Tractor Parts*) especially.

"The thing that I respect about Lee is his whole concept of taking acoustic sounds and

acoustic instruments and leaving them really pure. That was what I really related to. He wanted to get into the acoustic field even more than we had before. His main concern was having a stand-up bass player as opposed to an electric."

Jesse: "He's slowly been falling into more roots orientated stuff and it's been more prominent in our listening in the last few years. It was common sense to approach him. So it was amazing that he was into the idea."

Both Zubot and Dawson agree, Townsend's influence produced a more laid back album than either their debut, *Strang*, or *Tractor Parts*. But their recent writing headed in that direction anyway. The all-acoustic instrumentation and the inclusion of Phelps also took care of the tempo. They toured together two years ago and became fast friends. He lives a relatively short distance away in Portland, Oregon. Besides he also had a fan in Townsend. Phelps sings Robert Johnson's dark and creepy *Hellhounds On my Trail* and John Martyn's wonderfully optimistic, *May You Never* – a huge hit for Eric Clapton. These tracks feature the very first singing on a Zubot & Dawson disc.

Jesse: "Well, we're not personally starting to sing. We just thought it would be a neat thing to have. Actually, on our last album, there's one track that's spoken word. It's more of just a guest feel song, than specifically saying, 'We want vocals.' We just kinda thought it would be fun to do something with Kelly, just to change up the vibe on the album a bit. But live, I don't think that will be a factor."

As with *Tractor Parts*, *Chicken Scratch*'s cover features the uniquely, eye-popping, Ralph Steadman-ish sleeve graphics created by Vancouver artist, the Nibbler – known also as John Rummén.

Steve: "It was an extension of how I felt about the musicians we get to play on the records. We like their personality to come out and we like them to have their own concepts



Photo: Frank Gasparik

as opposed to, 'Do this and make it sound like this. So we just kind of gave John a blank slate. . . and this is what he came up with (he laughs)."

Steve Dawson grew up in Vancouver. Jesse Zubot came from a farm near Mendham, Saskatchewan (pop. 50). They met through a mutual friend in 1993 in Vancouver. First impressions gentlemen please!

Steve: "Jesse was kind of from outer space. He talked then like he does now – pretty strange, a little bit lethargic. You kind of wonder what's going on there and you start to realize that there's a crazy creative dude. The first time we met I was playing with a drummer that lived with Jesse. My friend Dan said, 'There's this guy who just moved into my house you should jam.' I said, 'Cool.' Jesse was playing a lot of heavy metal guitar when he was a teenager and he brought down this huge amp and heavy metal guitar and played really fast solos. It was pretty funny."

Jesse: "I would say he was equally out there. At that point I was never in contact with anybody who finger-picked slide guitar before. It freaked me out because I didn't really understand it very much. It was definitely a different type of thing for me."

They ended up performing together with the cajun/roots combo, Spirit Merchants. One of their more memorable gigs included premier of Alberta, Ralph Klein's annual baseball picnic bash. Apparently, as soon as they erected their drum kit, the audience of 3000 immediately dwindled to 20. But mainly they spent three years of hardcore touring with little reward.

Jesse: "We did kamikaze tours into the States. Our gross income after five weeks on this one tour was eight hundred dollars between four of us. You do the math. We didn't walk away with a hell of a lot of money. We were sleeping in the van, in crack houses,

and on the beach – just wherever we could and eating pizza and burritos everyday."

The Spirit Merchants imploded at the end of 1995. Both Zubot and Dawson hung around Vancouver in various incarnations before it dawned on them that a couple of stripped down acoustic tracks they recorded with the Spirit Merchants received a decent amount of attention and airplay. So they set up a similar experiment in 1998 which turned into the Juno nominated *Strang*.

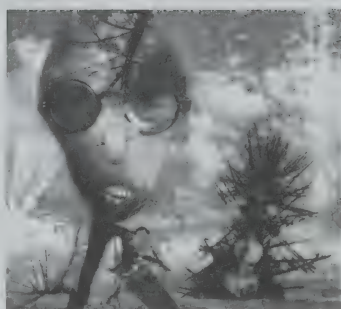
Jesse: "We didn't think too hard about making it a lasting project. It happened pretty fast and all of a sudden we got a bunch of gigs. The first gig was opening for Greg Allman in Vancouver which was a weird gig for music like that. I talked to him for a couple of minutes. That's about all you can talk to a burnt out old rock star. But it was great. We went, 'Holy! I guess we can actually play this stuff live.' People really liked that album and then gigs started coming. And before we knew it we were touring."

Steve: "We were surprised and overwhelmed by the fact that people actually thought it was cool because we were kind of messing around really. We had no set goals for it or anything. We just pressed a 1000 and put it out. Our expectations were so low. Within a year, we realized that maybe our expectations should be a little bit higher the next time."

*Strang* features a monologue by the great Bahamian guitarist Joseph Spence. Dawson once listened to a lot of Spence's recordings and recorded *Crow Flies Down* as a tribute.

"In that monologue he's talking about all the different styles of music that he can play. And he's listing them of and it's really funny because you can hardly understand a word he says. I just wanted to put that in as an obscure tribute to him."

They really had the bit between their teeth by the time they recorded *Tractor Parts* two



Graphics: The Nibbler

years later. More experimental than its predecessor, they spread their wings as wide as gypsy jazz and spoken word ruminations, featuring Veda Hille. It also received a Juno nomination.

Zubot and Dawson's reputation as cracker-jack session players also spread. Jesse for example, appears on the heralded Long John Baldry disc *Remembering Leadbelly*. They both occasionally appear with Baldry live. And Steve was on the Vancouver staff of the International Guitar Seminar. Its members included Bob Brozman and John Renbourn.

Jesse: "Things are starting to get quite interesting. We are starting to work with people we've looked up to for quite a few years. It seems like we can finally do things with people like Lee Townsend and Kelly Jo Phelps."

Steve: "It's fun owning records of people you look up to. You always think, 'Wow! these people are beyond being just people. Then suddenly you're hanging out being friends with them, making music. It suddenly comes into perspective. It's not about whose famous and all that kind of stuff. It's kind of cool, to have that bridge between people who don't seem real to suddenly being friends with them."



Photo: Frank Gasparik



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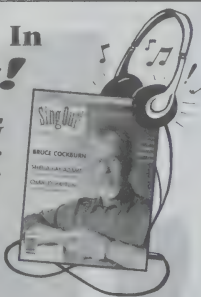
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# Great Big Sea



Great Big Sea

The most commercially successful roots group in Canadian history, Newfoundland's Great Big Sea play venues normally reserved for rock icons. They put singles on the pop charts. They receive mainstream radio airplay. And yet they proudly wave the folk banner high. Their fiddler and button accordionist Bob Hallett accounts for their commitment to traditional music. Tim Readman poses the questions.

**Penguin Eggs:** Would you say that Great Big Sea built their following through live performances?

Definitely. We had a lot of things going against us at the start. Geography was a huge stumbling block. Even to get to Halifax was a day's drive – a six-hour ferry ride, and then another five-hour drive. And then you're in Halifax and you haven't even begun to cross the country. But the difference is we knew we had something special in the live shows so we were quite prepared to do that. The first couple years of the band's career we really existed under the radar until. And even after we signed with Warner, they were pushing the mold trying to promote a folk band from

Newfoundland. It was even a couple years after that before mainstream media found out about us. By that time, so many people in Canada who were fans of live music had already beaten them to the punch. They had already seen us several times and they were spreading the word.

**If you were to do a quick character sketch of the members of Great Big Sea, how would you portray the four of you.**

There's four cooks in this organization and the kitchen is pretty crowded. All of us tend to keep pretty involved with the day to day running of the band, hand in hand with our manager. Between tours, when you may have three weeks off, people think great, but there's so much to be done that you're never really away from it all. I guess that's part of the reason for the success of the band: it's not one person begrudgingly taking it on their shoulders and does everything while others don't do anything. It's a democracy in the truest sense of the word. Every pitches in to do their part.

The funny thing about being in a band there's two parts to it. There's the music part and the time and attention that has to be devoted to that, whether it's rehearsing, or working on your own instruments, or re-arranging songs that you're doing live. And then there's the whole business side of it. It's hard to juggle the two. You can't pay attention to one and ignore the other. The key, even when you're

signed, is to make sure you spend as little money as possible so there's actually something to divide at the end of the day other than debt.

**One of the things that strikes me about Great Big Sea is you seem to have a foot in two different camps. You're grounded in traditional music from Newfoundland and you also have success in the pop market. You put records in the charts. How does the band feel about their relationship between their different worlds?**

We were all coming out of University and could have gone on to continue various fields and just do this on a weekend, which many brilliant musicians do. But we saw the whole idea of marrying both as being a feasible idea. We came at it from that way right from the beginning. Why did four of us growing up in totally separate families all enjoy listening to traditional music when in actual fact we rarely listened to it outside the family milieu? You'd go home and listen to your rock 'n' roll. But at a family party you were totally enthralled of the idea of listening to an uncle or an aunt sing a song that you hadn't heard before and it was about some area right around the corner and it was beautiful. So we saw the whole potential of taking themes that still meant something to everyone, no matter where you were from – an island or an industrial town in the middle of Ontario – and combine them with entertaining aspect.

**Do you ever get people from the folk world complaining to you that what you do isn't traditional enough?**

To be honest, I guess in the early days we may have gotten more of that than we do now. I guess we were viewed as young upstarts who were not doing anything for the tradition. But we just thought, well if you can get people who have never listened to traditional music before interested in it you are doing something for the tradition. So I think if we did have any people who were naysayers they sort of got it after a few years, what we were up to.

**One of the things in the folk world over the last couple of years people are actively avoiding using the word folk because of the negative connotations. You use the word quite liberally.**

How else are we to describe it? Call it Newfoundland music? Which is an empty phrase to a lot of people. What does that



mean? It's just as easy to say folk music. People ask me how I would describe the band and I usually say, 'It's aggressive folk.' That would be my two-word summation of the band because it is ultimately folk music, folk –played with fiddles, mandolins, accordions, bouzoukis. At the same time were treating it in a more aggressive way to make it more appealing to a younger listener.

**You must have come across music that you wouldn't have come across if you hadn't traveled. Is their stuff out there that influenced you in anyway?**

Definitely. Three that immediately spring to mind. One would be Christy Moore, who were fortunate enough to see at the first incarnation at the Guinness Fleadh Festival in London. Also, we saw in and around different folk festivals, Richard Thompson. Two of these guys when you watch them, you realize the power of one as opposed to the power of a band. Richard Thompson absolutely commands total respect. And Christy Moore if he doesn't get respect you're getting a blast so that everybody else in the crowd will make sure you get the message and settle down and listen. They had total control over the audience with one acoustic guitar. It's a powerful thing and it's not something I'll forget. The Canadian comparison to that would be Bruce Cockburn, just standing up at several folk festivals and playing beautiful music. Just seeing people enjoy-

ing the day and being totally engrossed in what he had to say. That's what appeals to me the most, having seen a solo performer and what they have accomplished.

Have you come across that band from Ireland – bunch of young fellas, Danú? That's the other extreme. That's six or seven buddies, just really good friends, and they are killer players. Every night they get up and play and what is amazing about them is when they finish on the stage they find another piece of real estate somewhere and play for the rest of the night. It just makes you want to say, 'How can anyone not like folk music when you hear a band like this absolutely slaying crowds every single night?'

**I've seen bands with twice the fire power of Great Big Sea but not the ability to bridge the gap with the audience, is that something that came early for the band?**

Yeah, I guess it did. Our first gig, we were playing in another conglomeration around St John's and that was just some guys playing more rock than traditional. The whole idea of getting people into bars and away from the bars to face you, that was a constant battle. If you're on stage you can fight that battle or you can just admit defeat right from the beginning. It's something we did in the pubs from day one and that only served to get our feet wet and help us out. We've turned over some

snarly crowds early in our careers. Nothing can put any fear into us now.



Bob Hallett

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# Recordings



Solomon Burke

## Solomon Burke

Don't Give Up On Me

Fat Possum  
80358

Jerry Wexler, the producer responsible for so much of the classic soul recorded in the '60s, remains convinced when he said: "Sam Cooke, Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Joe Tex, Sam & Dave - fine singers every one of them. But the best of 'em all? Solomon Burke with a borrowed band!"

The fortunate few who have actually seen Solomon Burke - all 360 lbs of him - are blessed; there are few masters left from the great days of rhythm and blues. He's made two astonishing appearances at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival - once with Amos Garrett and the House Band, and once with his entire entourage of a dozen musicians, three backup singers, and assorted security people, limousine drivers, cloak-folders and brow-moppers.

In his mid-60s now, he is indeed larger than life. Yes, he does have 22 children. Yes, he is a licensed mortician. Yes, he owns churches in more than a dozen large American cities (with missions, he says, in many smaller communities). Yes, his website has pictures of him meeting the Pope and playing in front of 100,000 people in St. Peter's Square.

Far more important than all of this - if less immediately fascinating - is the fact that the man's old school soul singing chops are still in amazing shape. His voice has range, power,

and an emotional impact that only soul's greatest performers can come close to matching.

The proof is apparent on this release, which is certain to be on most roots music Top 10 lists at the end of the year. As has been well publicised, producer Joe Henry and the folks at the label canvassed a who's-who of contemporary songwriters to come up with material for the project - and people like Van Morrison, Beach Boy Brian Wilson, Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe all delivered winners. Not to mention the title track, written by Dan Penn (who deserves sainthood for *Dark End of the Street*, one of the idiom's classic songs), and *Stepchild*, a wry song from Bob Dylan.

There are some astonishing highlights here. *Diamond in Your Mind*, a Tom Waits song, is one of those tunes you can't get out of your head if you hear it more than once; Burke handles the unusual imagery of the lyric with aplomb. *None of Us Are Free* (written by Barry Mann, still alas remembered for co-writing *Sometimes When We Touch* with Dan Hill) also features The Blind Boys of Alabama, one of the few remaining classic gospel groups in the older tradition. Nick Lowe's *The Other Side of the Coin* is a near-perfect song, and Burke gives it a perfect reading. *Sit This One Out*, the resigned sad song that closes the CD, is perhaps the finest vocal of them all, with Burke's baritone wrapping itself around words and melody like a blanket, in turn whisperingly confidential and then flat-out shouted. The production is clean and simple - the whole album was cut in four days - with the organist from Burke's Los Angeles church offering subdued licks behind a solid rhythm section and occasional gospel-imbued backup vocals.

Not since his classic days in the '60s has Burke delivered such good songs with such assurance. Classic soul may well be an endangered species now that Aretha Franklin sings disco and contemporary "rhythm and blues" has mechanical beats and no blues at all. But

Solomon Burke applied the verities of the idiom to new songs, and has delivered a masterpiece. Literally, they don't make records like this any more, but God will bless his servant for doing so, this one last time.

- By Richard Flohll

## Various Artists

Shining Bright - The Songs of Lal & Mike Waterson

Topic Records  
TSCD519

In 1968 Norma Waterson moved to Monserrat, the Watsonsons went into enforced retirement, and in the hiatus Lal and Mike Waterson turned verse into songs. At Martin Carthy's intervention, their creativity was channelled into 1972's *Bright Phoebus*. Some of the original - and how original! - songs were solo efforts, some collaborations. Prone to distraction, either might run out of steam or succumb to good weather. Both were better starters than finishers. *Scarecrow* - here interpreted by Dick Gaughan - went from sister to brother. The unfinished draft tripped Mike's memory of a morris side - the "twelve jolly dons" of his verse - and the song was ready to confound listeners for years to come. Six of *Shining Bright's* songs never made it to *Bright Phoebus* and these have fallen to Kate Brislin and Jody Stecher, Christine Collister and Oliver Knight, Christy Moore, Linda and Teddy Thompson, Norma Waterson, and Helen Watson and Heather Greenbank. If that list does not stimulate curiosity, then remember the poor sausages - the likes of Blue Murder, Billy Bragg & The Blokes, the Eliza Carthy Band, Martin Carthy and the Wrecking Crew (with a string arrangement by Robert Kirby of Nick Drake fame), Dayteller, John Pashley's Phoenix New Orleans Parade Band, Maddy Prior and Richard Thompson - who have revisited the *Bright Phoebus* material itself. These songs are all the better for requiring



The original Watersons, Mike and Lal on the right



time to live with and re-map meanings for. A truly ambitious, tastefully executed project, destined, I predict, to achieve a fame on its own merits as a folk landmark.

— By Ken Hunt

### Linda Thompson

Fashionably Late  
Rounder Records.  
116611-3182-2

How many people know about Linda Thompson? Without a doubt, anyone who heard the landmark albums she made with her ex-husband Richard will remember her crystal clear voice and sublime harmonies. *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* (1975) and *Shoot Out The Lights* (Rolling

Stone magazine's Album of the Year in 1982) were bookends of their career as a folk / rock duo. In between those albums the couple became immersed in Sufism and Linda became increasingly unhappy. Their final tour together was marked by violent confrontations, and they parted ways, with Richard embarking on a solo career which is still blossoming.

So what happened to Linda, you ask? Well, in 1985 she released a fine solo LP, *One Clear Moment*, co-written and produced by Betsy Cook. Their *Telling Me Lies* ended up on Emmylou Harris, Dolly Parton and Linda Ronstadt's, *Trio* album. Apart from that, nothing was heard from Linda until the 1996 retrospective collection, *Dreams Fly Away*, released on Hannibal Records. It turned out that Linda had been suffering from a rare condition called hysterical dysphonia, basically a dread fear of forgetting lyrics and public performance. The wonderful material on that CD underlined just how much her voice was missed. Linda's voice – whether at the front or providing harmony – is one of the sweetest, most expressive on record. Indeed, *Time* magazine has called her "rock's greatest female singer". Please add "folk" to that as well.

Since then occasional recordings – most notably by John Tams and Fairport's Simon Nicol – have featured Linda as a guest singer. Now we have a brand new CD, with nine original songs and one composition by the late, lamented Lal Waterson (*Evona Darling*). Linda's marriage to Richard also produced three gifted children, of whom Teddy and Kamila appear here. Teddy, in fact, has co-written and co-produced *Fashionably Late*. He also plays guitar in the band, and duets with Linda on *Evona Darling*.

Other guests include Kate Rusby, Eliza Carthy, Martin Carthy, Rufus Wainwright, Van Dyke Parks, John Doyle, John McCusker, Andy Cutting, Kathryn Tickell, Danny Thompson, and the man himself, Richard Thompson.

Firmly rooted in tradition, there are some wonderful new songs here. Most notably, perhaps, *No Telling* – a real tear-jerker with Rusby's mournful harmonies underlining the

### PENGUIN EGGS



Gwen Swick

depths of despair the song's hero had fallen into. Until he's rescued by a love song, and there is a happy ending – if you can keep from falling apart long enough to catch that ending! *Nine Stone Rig* and *On The Banks of the Clyde* are powerful contemporary ballads of murder and desolation. *Weary Life*, with Eliza Carthy on fiddle and backing vocals, is a new variation on the theme of *I Wish I Was A Single Girl Again* or *Do You Love An Apple*, and *Paint & Powder Beauty*, with Martin Carthy on trademark robust acoustic guitar, warns of the real women behind the "mask". *Dear Old Man Of Mine* is a friendly dig at the ex, while *Miss Murray* is a gorgeous melancholy tale of love and loss. So too *All I See*.

Oh yes. Linda Thompson is back. Truly great singers – and songwriters for that matter – are so skilled in the art of portraying sadness and misery that they make you feel good listening to them! This CD is stunning. Beautiful, powerful, intensely sad at times, yet ultimately life-affirming. She will kiss your ears so sweetly you won't believe how glad you feel to be alive. Trust me.

— By Steve Edge

### Guy Clark

The Dark  
Sugar Hill  
SUG-CD-1070A

If any doubt remains that Guy Clark is an eminent chronicler of North American experience, it's dispelled every time he takes pain and suffering and places them in a song you're willing to hear more than once. Not every cut on this new disc from the dignified Texas tunesmith is sad, but the ones that are, are excruciatingly so. Yet Clark, who co-wrote 11 of the 12 tracks, fashions haunting beauty from each sorry detail.

Even sources that seem unlikely for song bend to his will, with his sharply-observed refrains and sweet melodies. *Soldier's Joy* 1864 crafts an uplifting tribute from the

thoughts of a soldier whose gangrenous leg is being hacked off. *Queenie's Song* superbly articulates the unremitting fury of man towards man, through the tale of a defenceless dog that's shot to death. And *Homeless*, well, it says so many things well, including, "when the final line unfolds, it don't always rhyme."

Ably assisted by band regulars Verlon Thompson and Darrell Scott and guests Tim O'Brien and Gillian Welch, the album is lush with elegant choruses and tasteful country-folk picking. Clark's voice is appropriately flavourful, yet strong and supple. Yet another treasure, from a bona-fide treasure.

— By Helen Metella

### Gwen Swick

Love and Gold  
Independent

If you only know Gwen Swick from her work with Quartette or Tamarack, then you really don't know her at all. Just her membership in these groups attest to her talent, but her three solo albums offers something completely different – a lovely revelation of a quirky and talented songwriter. With *Love And Gold*, you're captured from the opening, *Amazed*, which tells the story of a nun that leaves the convent to open a beauty parlour because "When you look good you feel good". It's followed by a lovely children's song about a child and a star named Emily. It's delightful.

This disc meanders through folk, country, jazz, blues, spoken word and rock with ease and passion. It's hip and intelligent yet warm and emotional. The arrangements are whimsical, very musical, and extremely pleasing. It's a remarkable ride that she takes us on in thirteen marvelous songs through her imaginative world, a world where people:

*Curse the dry of the desert,  
Water the lawn in the rain,  
stand outside and yell at the thunder  
and then turn on the fan in the middle of a hurricane.*

A world where she confesses to owning cats that talk about her, then look into her soul and are "satisfied with their creation". And where it's ok to *Take a Little Nap*. If you've not visited before, welcome to the wonderful world of Gwen Swick.

— By Les Siemieniuk

### Bill Frisell

The Willies  
Nonesuch  
79652-2

Renowned in jazz circles for his collaborations with the likes of Charlie Haden, Carla Bley and John Scofield, guitarist Bill Frisell continues to experiment in the roots arena. *The Willies*, brilliant title, features Frisell and Bad Livers' banjo player, Danny Barnes, along with bass player, Keith Lowe, covering a variety of old-time traditional instrumental tunes such as *Cluck Old Hen*, *Blackberry Blossom* and *Sittin' On Top Of The World*. Alvin

Pleasant Carter's *Cold, Cold Heart* and *John Hardy Was A Desperate Little Man* also put in appearance along with Hughie Leadbetter's classic *Goodnight Irene*. The remainder of the sixteen tracks belong to Frissell and slip seamlessly into the overall gentle, flow of this enlightened disc. A tasteful, polished and restrained affair from start to finish, apart, of course, from the deliberately debilitating, *I Know You Care*. And it sparkles through subtlety rather than the heavy-handed, pyrotechnical picking normally associated with the normal purveyors these tunes. It's also an extremely grounded disc and never wafts off into the airy-fairy land of New Age bilge a la Bela Fleck. Instrumental in its entirety, these tunes flourish on the consummate skills of three unquestionable talents. Grab what you can of *The Willies*.

— By Roddy Campbell

### Craig Korth

Bankview  
Sadiebird Records  
SR14002

I've known Craig Korth since he was 17. We played together for a short time in a band that was long on enthusiasm and short on talent — except, of course, for the skinny kid on the right side of the stage with the long blonde hair and the five-string banjo. None of us knew how to properly play bluegrass, but we had a fun summer touring around a bunch of festivals before saying our goodbyes.

In the 20-plus years since, Korth's playing has become immensely more intricate and melodic, along the lines of two of his banjo heroes, Tony Trishka and Peter Werenick. With *Bankview*, his long-awaited solo CD, the Calgary musician establishes himself as perhaps Canada's pre-eminent banjo player, something many of us have known for a long time through his association with the extremely talented Alberta-based bluegrass unit, Jerusalem Ridge.

Although bluegrass nuts will love it, this is not a really a bluegrass album. *Bankview* is simply great acoustic music, featuring great musicians on great material, most of it Korth's own original instrumentals. I can't wait to get it into the hands of a friend of mine who loathes banjo music, which he says is twangy, always out of tune, too hillbilly and unhip. On *Bankview*, there are no shave-and-a-haircut endings and barely a Scruggs-style lick to be found among the 13 tracks, which range from the beautifully flowing opener, *Pilot's Rest*, to the Irish-influenced medley *Menaik Road/Bush in the Peg Hole* and the hard-driving *Burnt*. The disc features two vocals, *Jackson*, with Billy Cowstill and Julie Kerr, and *The Ice Runs Through Your Bones*, with Ronnie Hayward, Cowstill and Korth.

The CD's strength, however is its wonderfully melodic instrumental cuts. To bring out his fine material, Korth has called upon the great mandolinist John Reischman and two

bandmates from his band, The Jaybirds — guitarist and co-producer Jim Nunally and upright bass player Trisha Gagnon. The bench strength goes deeper still with two of Korth's Jerusalem Ridge partners, the tasteful Byron Myhre on fiddle and Keith Burgess on guitar, as well as Alberta guitar wizard Lester Quitzau, Hayward, Cowstill, Kerr and upright bassist John Hyde. Korth's nine originals are so strong it's difficult to choose a standout. Forced to pick favorites, I'd vote for the call-and-answer *Beyond the Ridge*, probably because I've heard Jerusalem Ridge do it so many times, *Burnt*, for its drive, and *My Friend Jim*, which Korth cross-picks on guitar and which I like simply because it's so damn catchy.

— Bob Remington

### Niamh Parsons

Heart's Desire  
Green Linnet  
GLCD 1219

It takes a great artist to reveal something new in *West Coast of Clare*, a song that debuted on Planxty's debut album and has since been memorably performed by any number of well-known singers, including Mary Coughlan and Maura O'Connell (and less memorably performed by an even greater number). It is, without doubt, a gorgeous song, but done to death. I was, therefore, a little worried to note it amongst, *Heart's Desire*. Well, those fears were soon put to rest for Parson's flays the song right to the bone and shreds any notions of quaintness or sentimentality. In her hands it is a sad, sad song, deep and mysterious-full of, as the song says, "such sweet pain".

And in many ways this is the central tone of this album—Niamh's father, Jack Parsons, died two years prior and *Heart's Desire* is dedicated to his memory. So the album has that feeling of casting one's mind back to days gone by, to lost love, life, and fading memory. The opener, *My Lagan Love* was one of Jack's favourite

songs and Niamh's a cappella performance is gripping as she rides an emotional knife edge. It's followed by another slow and beautiful traditional piece, *The Rigs of Rye*. The only really upbeat inclusions are the two sets of tunes from guitarists Graham Dunne and Dennis Cahill (the latter also produced the album). A version of *Brokenhearted I'll Wander*, also known as *The Bonny Light Horseman*, is included that stands shoulder to shoulder with the Watsons' landmark rendition on *For Pence and Spicy Ale*. The album closes on a hopeful note with *Bramblethorn*, a powerful anti-war song from English singer/songwriter, Clare Daniels. Throughout, Niamh is supported by a small but sympathetic group of players: the aforementioned Dunne and Cahill, as well as Josephine Marsh (accordion), Niamh's sister Ann Parsons-Dunne (vocals), Terry Coyne (vocals and whistle), Tony Gibbons (vocals), Mick Kinsella (harmonica). The end result is an often spartan presentation, but a warm and full sound, all the more so for Parsons' rich and distinctive voice. How she will better this one, I have no idea, but we all said that about *In My Prime* and she has gone and done it anyway.

— By Richard Thornley

### Doug Cox & Todd Butler

Live Blues  
Pacific Music  
PM 10432

It was only a minor stroke of genius to have masterminded this CD's title: but it addresses the content: eleven tracks recorded across two B.C. bars in 2002, minus overdubs and representing varying degrees of polish. Variations on classics including Junior Wells' *Messin' with the Kid*, Elmore James' *I Can't Hold Out* and even Rory Gallagher's *Too Much Alcohol* mesh nicely with three originals, most notably Cox's slinky instrumental, *Musta Notta Gotta Lotta*. But there's something more than blues going on here. Cox and Butler don't take their entertainment lightly, delivering a highly unconventional, double guitar approach that scores mightily in the originality department across a wide divergence of styles. If you like your blues wringing wet, and fashioned around slippery, slithery guitars with just a pinch of humour thrown in for good measure, then this slightly-twisted collection may be for you. Cox is a local hero, renowned for his gifts on slide guitar, lap steel and dobro while Butler adds guitar and vocals, plus an element of his comedic background to this enlightened presentation. The closest reference point might be McKenna-Mendelsen Mainline (due mainly to Butler's gruff vocals and Cox's inventive guitar), but the level of musicianship is on a higher plane. Cox's colourful, off-kilter guitar work is clearly the secret weapon here but the combination of Cox to Butler makes for a dynamic, if not demented, duo who would, according to this release, be a blast live.

— By Eric Thom



Niamh Parsons





### The Blind Boys of Alabama

Higher Ground

Real World  
7087 6 17438 21

Despite a Grammy and unprecedented media coverage, *Spirit of the Century* proved somewhat of a hollow victory for gospel godfathers, The Blind Boys of Alabama. They made it abundantly clear the discomfort they felt recording spiritually ambiguous songs by the Rolling Stones, Tom Waits and Ben Harper.

Well, two years later that discomfort appears dissipated as *Higher Ground* features Funkadelic, Prince and Jimmy Cliff, covers. This time around though, there's none of the awkward alien inconsistencies that belittled *Spirit*. Indeed, there's a precious brazenness at play here as the Blind Boys surround themselves with the superb sacred steel guitarist Robert Randolph and his Family Band. Harper, too, puts in journeyman service on the odd occasion.

But truly, the Blind Boys have rarely sounded so energized. Their utterly amazing funk-ed-up cover of Steve Wonder's *Higher Ground* surely ranks as an all time highlight. Yet, not to belittle the powerful dignity that emerges from the opening *People Get Ready*, which indeed must also take pride of place on a disc that deserves prolonged applause as much for its startling innovation as for its blessed singing.

— By Roddy Campbell

### Ian North

Emptiful

Independent  
in-2001-001

Singer-songwriter Ian North has had an eclectic musical career. He earned fans in Toronto with punk-country swing band the Swingheads, paid dues in rural Ontario bars playing country, blues and rock, and honed his

The Blind Boys of Alabama songwriting in Toronto's famed Fat Albert's coffeehouse. This solo CD has a predominantly folk feel, but traces of those other strains add variety. It doesn't always work, as on the lame pseudo-reggae feel of *Digging A Hole*.

He has an attractively melodic voice and a highly literate writing style. His songs are treated well by many of Toronto's best players, including former Blue Rodeo drummer Cleave Anderson and bassist Maury Lafoy, while multi-instrumentalist North contributes mandolin, lap steel and fluent lead and rhythm guitar. The pedal steel work of Tim Bovaconti and backing vocals of Linda Feijo add texture, and the engineering and mixing of Vaughn Passmore (*Stratochief*) is clean and gloss-free. There's a distinct Canadiana feel here, with echoes of artists ranging from (especially) Bruce Cockburn to Blue Rodeo. One exception is *Jazz America*, an apparent tribute to beat pioneer Jack Kerouac — "it's like jazz, Jack, laying down tracks" — and an album highlight.

North tackles such issues as globalization (*One Big World*) and exploitation (*Columbus*), but the more personal material works best. A promising outing, *Emptiful* shows that North is heading in the right direction.

— By Kerry Doole

### Beebop Cowboys

Debut

Independent

The Beebop Cowboys are a Toronto-based, western swing band currently playing up a storm and getting a lot of favourable attention on CBC. Their *Debut* offers smatterings of country, blues, jazz and, naturally enough, western swing. It features such old favorites, as *Is You or Is You Aint My Baby*, *Detroit City*, *Lucky Old Sun* and *Ram-Bunk-Shush*, all beautifully executed and bundled up in energy, enthusiasm and instrumental excellence. Great

band. Super performance. Really nice disc. It's no wonder the Cowboys have a steadily growing fan base.

(available at [stevecowboybriggs@yahoo.com](mailto:stevecowboybriggs@yahoo.com))

— By Louise Peacock

### Mason Jennings

Century Spring

Architect Records  
Arch 003

"I wanted Century Spring to feel very natural and honest. I think of the album as a single love story and I tried to cover the gamut of the different ways that love can make you feel," says Mason Jennings. Well he certainly covers most of the angles on this his third release. There are songs of true love, perfect love, love gone bad, parting, and sadness such as the title track, *Sorry Signs on Cash Machines*, *Dewey Dell*, *Bullet* and *Adrian*.

Musically and stylistically much of *Century Spring* is reminiscent of writers such as Cat Stevens, solo Paul McCartney or for a more contemporary reference, Badly Drawn Boy. But what makes him stand out from the crowd? Well he has a well honed pop sensibility that separates him from many singer-songwriters. He has at least attempted to establish his own identity in a genre which currently seems to be totally overpopulated. If you are a fan of poetic lyrics and pop tinged melodies he's your man.

— By Tim Readman

### Leon Rosselson

The Last Chance

Fuse Records  
CFCD 008

Nobody writes songs like Leon Rosselson. Never one to write songs on autopilot, he was one of the finest of the post-Ewan MacColl wave of songmakers to bring the waft and craft (if not eye-rhyme) of otherness to British songwriting. Francophone chanson, for example, provided a benchmark of excellence and its standards persist in his work.

Of the four tracks, all themed on Israel/Palestine, on *The Last Chance*, *The Song of Martin Fontasch* and the title song are from earlier Rosselson albums (*Intruders* and *Perspectives* respectively) while *They Said* previously appeared on *Irregular Records'* Article 14 anthology. *My Father's Jewish World* is new to silver and another song that is all the better for having a wholly Rosselsonian angle.

Each song is current in Rosselson's present live repertoire but his bespoke notes furnish a heightened sense of context on a historical and personal level. Some may argue that the British folk scene never had a better cynic; to which I would add that it rarely had a better optimist than Rosselson. *The Last Chance*. (Available from Fuse Records, 28 Park Chase, Wembley Park, Middlesex, GB-HA9 8EH. Profits go to Medical Aid for Palestinians)

— By Ken Hunt

**Peter Case**

Bee Line  
Vanguard

Like James McMurtry and Peter Mulvey, Peter Case's name is more widely known than his music. *Bee Line* offers a full frontal realization of what's missed by ignoring his recordings.

The opening track, *If You Got A Light To Shine* is a bluesy 'pop' song - in the best, antiquated sense of the term, highlighted by harp and swarming percussion. In a previous era, this type of song had a chance of being a surprise radio hit. Notwithstanding the spontaneous manner in which these songs appeared to Case, the respect with which his compositions are crafted is evident. On *Evening Raga*, where it would be convenient to fill the expansive atmosphere of the song with cumbersome bits and pieces to reflect the current favour with World Music, Case keeps it simple in the spirit of the best traditional folk and blues. The percussion is basic and groove steady with only the faintest hints of Eastern sounds spicing the blend. The effect is mesmerizing.

Indeed, *Bee Line*, may prove a career pinnacle. His voice is endearing - buoyant but emotionally charged. The lyrical simplicity contrasts with the creative arrangements that emphasize a whole, genre-establishing package - the broad intermingling of ragas and blues with country and rock.

Case is from a generation when music and commitment were companions, not anachronisms. Bee Line grabs the listener and stands up to repeated listening. You will find something new and engaging on the twentieth listen as readily as on the first. Case's music bridges gaps between musical worlds (albeit entirely different worlds) as ably as the best of Tim O'Brien and Angelique Kidjo.

- By Donald Teplesky

**Flook**

Rubai  
Flatfish  
Flatfish 004CD

On this their second studio recording, Flook pick up where they left off three years ago, although their sound has clearly grown and matured in the intervening period. Whereas *Flatfish* at times sounded a bit shrill, sparse even, Flook have softened the sound ever-so-subtly on *Rubai*. The ambience is fuller, more developed, and they have expanded the instrumental arsenal - including Rory McLeod's trombone, Martin Cradick's wah wah mandolin, Colin Farrell's fiddle, and Seckou Keita's percussion - filling out the already impressive mix of flute and whistle, guitar and bodhran. *Rubai* consists of twenty-two tunes, and fully half are written by one or the other of the tag-team flautists, Brian Finnegan and Sarah Allen. The sound ranges from the funkified *Empty Pod* to the straight ahead trad-sounding Irish jig *North Star*. Then there is a



Flook

traditional tune from each of Greece and Spain, and *G.D.* is a hoot with its stadium-rock e-bow guitar riffs courtesy of recording engineer Mark Tucker. The rhythm section of Ed Boyd and John Joe Kelly is accomplished, though at times Boyd's distinctive bodhran could stand to be toned down just a tad. Flook have escaped the "difficult second album" syndrome and produced in *Rubai* a disc that even flute-aphobes should give a listen to.

- By Sandy Stiff

**Richard Shindell**  
**Courier Live**

Signature Sounds Recording Company  
SIG 1270

In his fifth album, Richard Shindell proves to be a man of many faces - two of them female - sainted and sanctified. Each song is a story-in-miniature, yet his characters and plot-lines are hardly paltry, even given the three-to-four-minute on-stage duration. His voice can be bitter (in the anti-war First World War opener *Courier* in which he is the trench-bound mailman), gently and sadly reflective (*Reunion Hill's Civil War* widow a decade after her husband's death), youthfully bewildered in the face of approaching combat (the Confederate drummer boy and "mascot" of *Arrowhead*), or the wondering voice of loss (Jesus' lover in *The Ballad of Mary Magdalen*). Above all, though, there is the writing, and Shindell's rich characterizations. Where else would you see a picture of a war widow crossing her own field "one eye trained upon the ground / even now I find their things / glasses, coins and golden rings?" Or of the decidedly unvirgin Mary describing her hard times: "But long ago I had my work / when I was in my prime / but I gave it up, and all for love / it was his career or mine?" Treasures aplenty, indeed.

- By Gordon Morash

**The Corb Lund Band**

Five Dollar Bill  
Stony Plain Records  
SPCD1284

The strong songwriting grabs you first on this disc by Edmonton singer/songwriter/guitarist, Corb Lund (formerly of The Smalls) and his fine band. The tunes enter your brain effortlessly and there they stay - always the mark of a superior songwriter. Ably produced by Dead Reckoner, Harry Stinson, who also drums on several tracks, the disc sounds great and has wonderful playing by all concerned, including Nickleback drummer, Ryan Vekedal. Then, there's authenticity. Unlike many Alt-Country stars, Corb Lund has actually ridden in rodeos (that's apparently him as a young man on the cover) and has cow punchers and bronc riders going back on both sides of his family. I thought the guitars might be session musicians but, after catching his solo set live, I realized many of the tasty little fills and embellishments are Lund himself. The man can play a mean guitar. There's too many standout tracks to list them all here, so just go buy it. A buckin' horse winner!

- By Barry Hammond

**Various Artists**

The Rough Guide to the Music of Spain  
RGNET 1082 CD

**Various Artists**

The Rough Guide to the Music of India  
RGNET 1091 CD

**Various Artists**

Passion  
RGNET 1081 CD

**Various Artists**

Oxam Latin Dance  
RGNET 1108 CD

The countries, regions, and genres covered in the ongoing Rough Guide series obviously have too much breadth to allow for compilations that are truly definitive. The worthiness of each recording is therefore contingent on the degree to which it contains variety, is consistent in quality, and has incisive notes. These four meet those criteria better than most.

It must have been a challenge to choose artists from the various regions of Spain but many important regions are represented, including Andalusia, Catalonia, Castile, and the Canary Islands. The artists featured are among the country's best and include Javier Ruibal, Luis Delgado, Maria Salgado, Diego Carrasco, and saxophonist-flautist jazzman Jorge Pardo. Some of the selections predictably fall into the flamenco or fandango genres while others, such as Hiru Truku and Anubia, tap into less familiar idioms, such as Basque rock and Galician a capella vocal music respectively.

The India compilation's lead and closing tracks are Bollywood songs, the first featuring the legendary Asha Bhosle singing her husband R.D. Burman's famous *Aaj Ki Raat*, the last a track by the less known Hemant Kumar.



Most of the rest of the album emphasizes more traditional sounds of the Indian subcontinent. Ken Hunt, who compiled the album, didn't focus on the biggest names, although some important figures are represented, including V. M. Bhatt (known in the U.S. for his work with Ry Cooder and in Canada for being mentor to Harry Manx), and M.S. Subbulakshmi, a very influential singer of Karnatic music in the Hindustani tradition. Other tracks feature Sultan Khan, a master of the sarangi; Kamallesh Maitra, a one-man gamelan orchestra; saxophonist Kadri Gopalnath; a Gypsy group named Musafir; a sixteen-piece brass band; and singers from the Baul culture.

Calling an album *The Rough Guide to Passion* sounds rather indelicate, which is presumably why the label reduced the title to simply *Passion*. One could argue that most forms of music are implicitly passionate, except for some modern composers and sterile forms of corporate music, i.e. the kind that dominates most radio playlists these days. *Rough Guide* has opted for artists who exude passion but who are, for the most part, only known in their part of the world. The album starts with fado and ends with Gregorian chant and in between makes room for tango, Afro-Cuban jazz, music inspired by whirling dervishes, klezmer (the well-known Klezmatics), a Navajo singer (Sharon Burch), flamenco (Potito), as well as Irish and Gaelic singers, all undeniably passionate performers, although obviously only the tip of a huge iceberg.

*The Oxfam Latin Dance* gives us samba, merengue, tango, mambo, and salsa but no lambada or macarena for the gringos with two left feet. While a full album of any one of those genres tends to become monotonous to those who aren't committed fans, the beauty of this compilation is that the variety as well as the distinctive styles of the artists make it consistently pleasing to anyone with at least a moderate interest in Latin dance music. Chichi Peralta's *Procura*, a big hit in Latin America in

the 90s, sets the tone right off but he's in the company of other big names, such as Africando, Sierra Maestra, the late Mario Bauza, and Cubanismo, the latter also appearing on the *Passion*. The other ten artists are generally not as well known. As with the other three CDs, few listeners are likely to be familiar with all the artists. It's that sense of discovery that makes this particular batch of *Rough Guides* worthwhile.

— By Paul-Emile Comeau

### Aengus Finnan

North Wind  
Borealis Records  
BCD148

On the basis of one song alone on North Wind, it is clear that Aengus Finnan has stood in Stan Rogers's shadow long enough. That song is *O'Shaughnessy's Lament*, an a cappella story of a Canadian silver miner who loses his wife and twins in childbirth. And while Finnan does not have the deep resonance of Stan Rogers's singing voice, he more than delivers the goods as an author. If there's a dry eye in the house as Finnan performs this song — which this past summer won the new song-writing award at the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas — then you're simply not listening.

After a three-year wait, *North Wind* is the second Finnan CD. While he carries — likely to his detriment — the storytelling genetic markings of a Rogers, Finnan is very much his own man. The 14 songs here, 10 of them written by Finnan, are all over the map stylistically and topically. There are introspective conversations, love songs (including one with the ghost of a late husband), dreams gone bad, a narrated soundscape of a deadly logjam performed in the cadence of Robert W. Service, some painfully rendered history, and several workers' yarns (such as the trucker ode *Rollin' Home*, which has just won an honourable mention in the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals's Songs from the Heart competition).

But in one heartbreaking moment, *O'Shaughnessy's Lament*, Aengus Finnan melds together all of these elements. "So I'll chip away my days, deep beneath the ground / Pickin' at the rocks where silver's to be found / But oh, it's all for naught, and I'd throw it all away / If I could have you near and hold you one more day." To my ears, that's classic songwriting, with a performance to match.

— By Gordon Morash

### The Boggs

We Are The Boggs We Are  
Ryko  
RCD 16011

Like the Tarbox Ramblers, Bad Livers, and to a certain extent, Gillian Welch, The Boggs make old-time music on their own terms. *We Are The Boggs We Are*, like Welch's debut, *Revival*, is recorded entirely in mono. Truly, these Boggs go to extreme lengths to make this disc sound like some field recording from the 1920s. It even seems to open at 78 r.p.m. Gimmicks aside though, there's a gritty rawness on display here that's both refreshing and challenging. Jason Friedman's a grim vocalist for sure — an acquired taste in more polite circles — and the picking is sometimes as rough as a badger's bum. Yet their do-it-yourself, anything-goes feel, coupled with an often unbridled energy shouldn't be overlooked. Besides Friedman's a genuinely wonderful songwriter. The late lamented A.P. Carter would surely liked to have laid claim to Friedman's *Plant Me A Rose* or *We Shall Meet Again* — the latter played on an autoharp for goodness sakes! Give me their imperfections and honesty any day over the polish and posing normally associated with this genre.

— By Roddy Campbell

### Eliades Ochoa

Estoy Como Nunca  
Virgin/Yerbabuena  
724388124802

The title means "I am like never," which is as good a way as any to remember that Eliades Ochoa's music is steadfast and enduring. He was one of the youngest of Cuba's traditional musicians to be profiled in the *Buena Vista Social Club* project in 1997. He's the fantastically sublime guitarist and vocalist with the black cowboy hat, who has dedicated most of his 56 years to playing guajira, the country blues of white peasants.

The subjects of these songs are as characteristically gentle and plainspoken as the laments of any rural blues: a farmer's coffee plantation (*Mi Cafetal*), a woman leaving (*Ella Si Va*) and pain in the soul (*Con Dolor En El Alma*). There's plenty of the up-tempo call and response so integral to Eastern Cuba's son style and the off-beat clave rhythm particular to most Afro-Cuban music stirs heat under the feet. But the most enchanting aspect is the expert musicianship of Ochoa and the current



The Boggs

version of Cuba's 40-year-old dance band, Cuarteto Patria. Stunning and intricate solos embellish almost every track and Ochoa's warm tenor positively glows.

Los Lobos' David Hidalgo and The Mavericks' Raul Malo make brief guest appearances on guitar and vocals, but their contributions are hardly distinguishable from the overall excellence of the whole package.

— By Helen Metella

#### Antibalas

talkatiff  
Ninja Tune  
(ZENC66)

If you can shake the nagging feeling that you've heard it all before—and if you're familiar with even a smattering of Fela Kuti, Femi Kuti, or Tony Allen, you have—Antibalas' second album is an enjoyable romp. The ground won't tremble, the seas won't part, but as far as 21st century Afro-beat goes, it's pretty fine stuff.

Talkatiff has smoother edges, more funk, and tighter execution than the group's first album, *Liberation Afrobeat Vol. 1*. The groove is unshakable, some great skronky horns and organ, and plenty of soloing.

The downside is that the tunes aren't all that memorable; and they certainly don't push the envelope as pieces like *Battle of the Species* did on their earlier effort. The politics remain firmly in place (as evidenced by the artwork and track titles such as *Hypocrite* and *War* is a Crime, but as most of talkatiff is purely instrumental you can take them or leave them as you see fit. Overall? Retrenchment, a slight whiff of something past its best-before date...but top marks for fighting the good fight.

— By Richard Thornley

#### Little Charlie And The Nightcats

That's Big!  
Alligator  
ALCD 4883)

Still part traditional Chicago blues, part jazz-flavoured West Coast, part rockabilly-meets-surf music and part comedy act, Little Charlie Baty and his Nightcats continue to swing and smile across their eighth Alligator outing. *That's Big!* spells big fun in the form of Estrin's fat harp, Charlie's outlandish guitar versatility and their collective, blues-infused stew. Theirs is a tight formula that works, regardless of genre. Guests drop by to lend a hand like they might for any party: Rusty Zinn, James Harmon and Steve Lucky.

Yet it is the symbiotic relationship shared by Estrin and Baty that makes the Nightcats cook. Three instrumentals allowing them stretching room while underlining their growth as a hard-playing unit: *Bluto's Back* swings as it smokes with a hard edge and a retro groove while *Bayview Jump* showcases Baty's fast-fingered jazz technique at a blistering pace. *Coastin' Hank* boasts the rich chromatic slabs of sound that Estrin coaxes from his unique harp style.

Yet, the Nightcats burn brightest when Estrin's throws out his usually humorous takes on reality with his inimitable, wry delivery like some cool, cartoon character with impeccable rhythm and a band with the balls to back it up. The title track is a case in point with James Harmon assisting on vocals. Get yourself a taste of West Coast flash whose substance will bring you back to the table again and again for bigger bites.

— By Eric Thom

#### Enoch Kent

I'm A Workin' Chap  
Second Avenue Records  
SA2007

The Scottish folk song revival owed much to Enoch Kent. As a member of The Reivers and The Exiles he sang many of the traditional ballads that would later appear in the repertoires of Dougie MacLean, Dick Gaughan and even Archie Fisher. Kent, though, would immigrate to Canada in the '60s and has sadly, seldom recorded since.

While largely known as a fine interpreter of traditional songs, he wrote much of *I'm A Workin' Chap*. And I can't tell you how much pleasure it gives me to think such powerful, moving songs of substance as *The Farm Auction*, *No More Cod On The Banks* or *My Father's Cause* came out of a Canadian recording studio. While the range of Kent's voice falls short of the glory days, he nevertheless brings substantial warmth in an undeniable Scottish accent to the likes of *The Bonniest Lass*, *Van Diemen's Land*, and his old favourites *I'll Lay Ye Doon Love* and *The Floor Of Northumberland*. Tim Harrison provides much of the tasteful background when called for. This disc is largely a heartwarming throwback to an era when folk singers stood and sang about principles. The songs speak for themselves. Too long in exile this man.

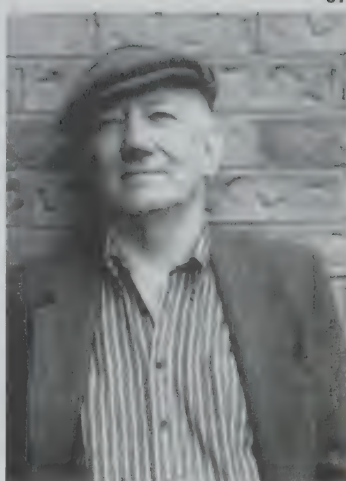
— By Roddy Campbell

#### So' Forest

Bikutsi Pop: The Songs of So' Forest  
Naxos World  
76032-2

By the third tune on this recording, you'll want to take a hammer to So' Forest's drum machine. The Cameroonian can come up with some catchy beats, but the infernal machine gives his otherwise funky music an unpleasant mechanical feel. Bikutsi, or "hit of the floor," originates with the dancing of Bantu fighters. So' Forest updates it with rap, turntable scratching and other popular gambits. However, his song writing isn't durable enough to last the more than hour's worth of music on this CD. As its title implies, the recording is rather light-weight pop music and So' Forest's vocal delivery, somewhere between a moan and a somnolent yodel, doesn't help it much. Overall, a rather annoying listen from this first-time artist.

— By Charles Mandel



Enoch Kent

#### Michelle Shocked

Deep Natural  
Mighty Sound

*Deep Natural* is Michelle Shocked's return to the greater public eye after an absence of several years. As always, she is the chameleon and this time around she seems really into exploring her newfound Christianity. I suppose it was only a matter of time before she settled on religion, given her interests in engagement and activism; and it's not a bad thing, because it gives some foundation to an outing that otherwise might have buckled under the weight of Shocked's hungry musical eclecticism.

*Deep Natural* opens with *Joy*: "Jealousy and anger, greed and hypocrisy, the seasons of human nature cannot take my joy from me," which effectively sets the tone for the rest of the album. There's a real blues and gospel feel to many of the songs, lots of pedal steel and brass too, and tons of deep reverb. A few of the tracks down in this approach; *What Can I Say* is a case in point — it comes across as murky and unfocused.

But when Shocked is on, she's really on. *Good News* is a throbbing R&B workout, proving that she has a convincing second career as a blues shouter. *That's So Amazing* could be a Hothouse Flowers piece (Fiachna O'Braonain co-produced the record) with its warm soul groove, solo trumpet, and huge singability; it'll get even the most disinterested agnostic up off the floor with its "that's soooooo amazing" vocal and brief segue into *Amazing Grace*. *Joy* is closer to the dub aesthetic that I expected from *Deep Natural*, and the ragga groove of *Peachfuzz* would be a hit in a more generous universe.

Topically, the album champions love, life, and liberty. Although Shocked wears her heart on her sleeve (e.g., *What I Need Lord*, *What I Need*, *your love is what I need from Moanin' Dove*), she's got such a great spirit that this



will deter only the most confirmed cynic.

There is a second disc included in the package, *Dub Natural*, which features differently treated and de-vocalized versions of the tracks from *Deep Natural*. It's enjoyable enough, pretty juicy in parts even, but it's hardly the dub workout that I was expecting, and most of it isn't dub, per se. Chalk it up as a partially realized experiment, and *Deep Natural* as a great return to form.

— By Richard Thornley

#### Coco Montoya Can't Look Back

Alligator  
ALCD4885

Somewhere along the line, Coco Montoya has turned his back on his mentors, Albert Collins and John Mayall, to become a rock star. While not an entirely fair assessment of his solo work, it comes closest to the truth with *Can't Look Back*. There's no question that Montoya's got wickedly muscular guitar chops and a potentially lethal voice, but he squanders them across this collection, with few exceptions. Here, using substandard material (or butchering good material — *Something About You* becomes a lame boogie compared to the Temptations/LeBlanc & Carr original hit), he barely lifts off the page, despite the slick production of veteran Jim Gaines. *Trip, Stumble And Fall* jumps into the heart of the matter with both feet. And Montoya's own *Running Away From Love* mines a deep vein that marries the best of his many skills. But *Wish I Could Be That Strong* could just as easily be Journey as Montoya. The guitar is there, albeit toned down on this outing. Just listen to his expertise with the Collins' track, *Same Old Thing*. *Free* gives a southern nod that more approximates Marshall Tucker than anything resembling blues. Not that it's bad to stretch out and explore new turf but this release seems devoid of focus, blurred by elements of R & B, a more gentle approach to his guitar, horns and multi-tracked vocals. Too bad he can't look back: it might help him to find his way forward.

— By Eric Thom

#### Jake Peters

Journey  
Independent  
JPO1

There must be some magic in the air in Alberta that has given us two fine instrumental albums in the same year. Jake Peters, a banjo, mandolin and exquisite finger-style guitar player from central Alberta, has written nine tracks on *Journey*, the same number of tunes Craig Korth penned on his solo CD, *Bankview*. Peters has an ear for capturing different sounds and rhythms, embracing a variety of styles from Appalachian to Celtic to Caribbean by tastefully incorporating djembe, accordion, Indonesian flute and snare drum.

The strong opening cut, *Journey to Cypress*,

#### PENGUIN EGGS



Pigeon-Hole

opens hauntingly with flute and then bubbles into a great groove with banjo tuned to double C. *Clearwater Run* has an old-time Appalachian flavor, played on a short-necked five-string banjo Peters built for his son. *Finger Dance*, a driving Celtic-influenced number inspired by the music from River Dance, makes you want to take up clogging. At the other end of the emotional spectrum is *Voice of Hope*, a relaxing, quiet mood piece that includes a child's voice and giggle. *Zeke's Beach* was inspired by steel drum music, using banjo, mandolin, accordion guitar and bass effectively to emulate dee sounds of dee islands, mon.

— Bob Remington

#### Gregg Lawless Wicked Little Buzz

Independent

*Wicked Little Buzz* packs all the spontaneity of their live performances. Backed by numerous seasoned musicians and guests, Lawless' songwriting offers equal helpings of wry humour, tenderness and nostalgia. Each song tells a story. Sometimes the story is funny, sometimes touching, sometimes sad, but always well told.

Each track has something special. The most touching and poignant surely is *Forever Falling*, inspired by his time working at a camp with terminally ill kids. An added bonus is Lawless' interesting and edgy vocals — a little bit folk, a little bit pop, a little bit alternative — which totally suits his stylistically difficult to pinpoint songs. A really enjoyable listening experience then, this *Wicked Little Buzz*. (Available from Grafton Music P.O. Box 65252, Toronto, Ontario M4K 3Z2) email: — By Louise Peacock

#### Pigeon-Hole

And the one they call Lightning  
Aquarius Records  
Q2 00604

O.K. let's get one thing straight here: there is a difference between folk music and music that uses acoustic guitars or features the work of original songwriters. So, that being said, if

you like original acoustic based pop songs which heavily feature twin lead female vocalists then this is for you. Isabelle Fahmy and Natasha Szuber are the singers in question and their vocal interplay and harmony give this new act a strong brand identity right from the get go. Influences and comparisons spring to mind from Ani DiFranco to the La's, from Joni Mitchell to the Pretenders, from Shirley Manson to Portishead. It is a powerful sound they have, often underpinned by groove laden acoustic guitars not a million miles away from the guitar sound of The Bare Naked Ladies. The lyrics are smart and street-wise. The music is bouncy and robust. Pigeon-Hole recently completed a Nettwerk records sponsored tour with similar acts called. Folk on the Road. This isn't folk music in spite of that moniker, but it is some of the most interesting pop music I've heard in a long time. Worth a go. Just quit calling it folk will ya?

— By Tim Readman

#### Dirty Dozen Brass Band

Medicated Magic  
Ropeadope/Ryko  
RCD 16007

Think street party. Think skin-tight, horn-based sound of early Tower Of Power, assuming each player has consumed his weight in alcohol. Not to say that anything about the DDBB is sloppy — quite the opposite. This is their ninth release that continues to celebrate the best of Crescent City — with a sound built upon the tradition of the brass band funeral march in all its pain and joy, plus elements of bop, gospel, funk, R&B and rock. The DDBB have been injecting life into funeral marches since death became popular — for some 25 years, in fact. Once their hook is set, you can't help but smile as the soul of New Orleans' slowly snakes its way into your entire body. Each release is a solid effort and this one is no different, adding various guests to romp through a mix of spicy originals and energetic cover tunes by the likes of the Meters, Dr. John and Allen Toussaint. Mix in talents including Dr. John, pedal steel wunderkind Robert Randolph, Norah Jones,

trumpeter/vocalist Olu Dora, Widespread Panic singer, John Bell and scratchmeister, DJ Logic for a wild ride through a forward-looking variety of material, including ace originals such as drummer Terrence Higgins' *We Got Robbed* or the highly appropriate *Ain't Nothin' But A Party*. One taste of guitarist James McLean's blinding solo on Rebennack's *Walk On Guilted Splinters* will, for example, give you a taste of the cure you've been craving. *Medicated Magic* is guaranteed, good-time medicine.

— By Eric Thom

### Chuck Prophet

No Other Love  
New West Records  
NW6039

Formerly of Alt-Country pioneer band, Green On Red, with whom he recorded eight albums in eight years while barely out of his teens, and a collaborator with Beat icon and poet, Herbert Hunke, Chuck Prophet's *No Other Love* is his sixth solo project. While still based in country rock, this disc is a funkier mix of elements. With its slicker, close-to-R & B bass lines, wah-wah guitar, Farfisa organ, and even an Eastern psychedelic string section in a couple of places, this disc drifts closer to pop, but with solid song writing and good ringing guitar parts in abundance. With its strong grooves and sexy feel, it's a fun disc, one to revel in. Put it on at a party and it's guaranteed to turn a few heads. For fans of Wilco, Son Volt, or Ryan Adams' newer stuff for sure.

— By Harry Hammond

### James McMurtry

Saint Mary of the Woods  
Sugar Hill  
SUG-CD-1071

At 40 years old, James McMurtry is gradually catching up to the artistic legacy of his father, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Larry McMurtry. While the latter recently published *Sin Killer*, his first novel in a new series of Western novels, the younger McMurtry is up to his sixth album (his third for Sugar Hill). While his father creates epic tales with memorable characters from a bygone era, James writes ambitious songs about the American heartland that are, more often than not, over five minutes long. McMurtry's two previous albums were produced by the reliable Lloyd Maines. This time the singer took up the challenge of producing himself and, to his credit, there is no loss of quality. Besides the rhythm section that accompanies him on the road, McMurtry is helped out by Ian McLagan on organ and Lisa Mednick on accordion. Guitarists David Grissom or Stephen Bruton are featured on some tracks but McMurtry can more than hold his own in that department. The album starts off with a fine version of Dave Alvin's *Dry River*, the only non-original. As for McMurtry's songs, they deal with such

themes as life on the road, middle America, and hardship and death. The closing track is *Choctaw Bingo*, a riveting eight and a half minute *tour de force* about a hillbilly family reunion in Oklahoma.

— By Paul-Emile Comeau

### Norman Blake

Old Ties  
Rounder  
1166-11583-2

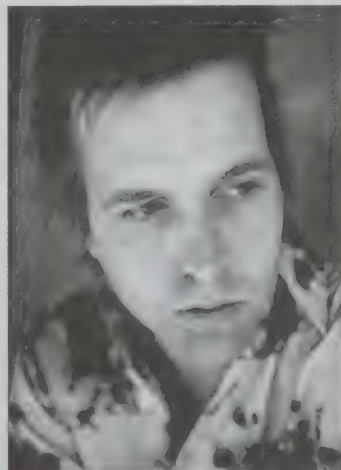
Talk about being in the right place at the right time. Acoustic guitar ace Norman Blake has been featured on three of the most important albums in American roots music — Bob Dylan's *Nashville Skyline* (*Hmmnn?...* *The Ed*), the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*, and the *O Brother, Where Art Thou* soundtrack.

That testifies to his talent as much as good timing. That's confirmed by this Rounder Heritage retrospective look at Blake's solo work. It features 19 bluegrass and country-styled tracks, some original, some with vocals, some instrumentals and some traditional (including songs by A.P. Carter and The Delmore Brothers).

Chronologically, it ranges from 1971 to 1990, but there's a seamless and timeless feel to the collection. Blake has a warm and pleasant voice, but it is his playing and strong sense of melody that stand out. Tony Rice contributes guitar and vocals to two songs, one of which, the instrumental *Lost Indian*, also features Doc Watson. Talk about a power-packed trio of virtuosos there.

Fiddle and cello are used extensively, sometimes giving a chamber-folk feel, so Old Ties never feels like just an excuse to show Blake's picking prowess. This is an album that will serve as a great introduction to Blake for new-found fans caught up in the *O Brother* phenomenon.

— By Kerry Doole



Chuck Prophet

### Corey Harris

Downhome Sophisticate  
Rounder  
11661-3194-2

Corey Harris is the new blood of the blues. Bearing testament to the teachings of the traditionalists, he is a hopelessly impassioned original, intent on blazing his own trail as he tells the stories of his time, his way.

*Downhome Sophisticate* finds him many miles away from the acoustic blues of his first two releases, getting back to the advanced business showcased on '99's *Greens From The Garden* that so expertly distinguished him from the pack. Yet this represents a huge leap forward as Harris reveals roots so deep and rich that the terms barely covers his multi-genre borrowings: reggae, blues, funk, gospel, rock, hip-hop, samba and soul. This trip utilizes bottleneck and slide guitar in equal parts to percussion, background vocals and horns as his 5 X 5 band demonstrates a frightening ability to authentically document his every whim.

Yet the overall takeaway is blues: from the stunning *Where The Yellow Cross The Dog* to the *Baby, Please Don't Go* sounding *Money On My Mind*. Then, out of left field, the hauntingly beautiful *Santora*, which thoroughly defies pigeonholing — as does Harris himself, it seems. This release takes a few listens and it's bound to confuse at first. Stick with it. You will discover a massive talent who is unable to limit himself to any definition at this tender point in his most promising career. Aptly titled.

— By Eric Thom

### Josephine. Marsh Band

i can hear you smiling  
Independent  
JMB 0002

Many years ago, a radio station program director advised me to remember that people can tell if you are smiling from the sound of your voice. In this case the voice is provided by a different instrument, but listen to *i can hear you smiling* and you know that Josephine Marsh is indeed smiling. On this her second solo effort, the accordion player from East Clare, Ireland, conveys pure joy in the form of hornpipes, jigs, reels, and the like. Known for her work with Niamh Parsons', as well as session work going back more than a decade, Marsh has been hailed by no less than Martin Hayes as a musician who "reveals remarkable insight and sensitivity towards the core of the tradition." With skilled backing from Declan Corey (mandolin/bouzouki), Tommy Carew (guitar), and Paul O'Driscoll (double bass), *i can hear you smiling* features tunes played with a light but deft touch. In addition to the traditional tunes, all arranged by the band, material sources include O'Carolan, Jerry Holland, and a healthy number of Marsh's own compositions. She keeps the tradition but does not hesitate to experiment with tempo and swing. The bookends of the disc are *The*



*International* - with a snare drum lending the feel of a road song - and *The Old Forge*, in which the road ends at an Irish country dance. Interspersed are a trio of songs, including a fabulous version of J.J. Cale's *Rose in the Garden*, all sung by guitarist Carew with a sort of Irish-trad-alt-country-drawl. *i can hear you smiling* is a lovely, warm recording - you will smile too.

- By Sandy Stiff

### Chuck Brodsky

The Baseball Ballads

Chuck Brodsky Records

Chuck Brodsky is a terrific songwriter. And sprinkled throughout his last four albums were songs about baseball. In fact Chuck has made a peculiar specialty of writing about America's pastime. Nine of his songs are in the Sound Recording Library of the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown NY. Happily for us fans he has collected them all on this new disc.

You can hear about *Eddie Klepp* the only white player to ever play in the Negro Leagues. Or *Moe Berg* - not the pursuit of happiness Moe Berg but the baseball playing spy. Chuck writes about *The Unnatural Shooting of Eddie Watkins* - The Robert Redford film *The Natural* was based on the shooting - Chuck tells the story a little differently. *Lefty* was his first baseball song that he wrote in 1991. It's a poignant account of a has-been pitcher trying to hang on.

The Baseball Ballads is a terrific album. The songs are original, entertaining and dammit you learn a bit about why baseball has fascinated so many writers over the years. It is the most literate of sports and Chuck has done it's history justice. I hope the next album takes this theme into extra innings

- By Les Siemieniuk

### Maggie MacInnes

Siorad Beatha (The Spirit of Life)

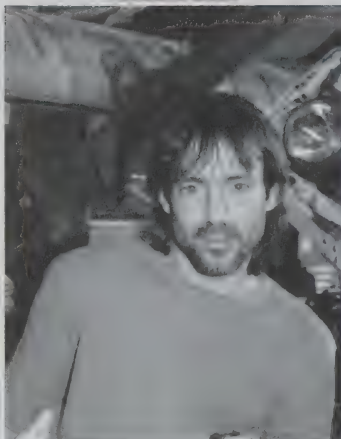
R2 Records

R2CD 2003

Maggie MacInnes comes from a long line of singers from the Island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides and is also closely connected with their descendants now living in Cape Breton, including the Barra MacNeils. She has been involved in a number of Scottish bands including Ossian, Fuaim and Eclipse First.

This is her second solo recording and it features some fine musicians including Charlie McKerron of Capercaille, Brian McAlpine of Iron Horse, and Sean O'Rourke formerly of JSD Band. The material is mainly traditional, arranged by Maggie and her musical collaborators. The music here is lyrical and delicate for the most part. Her singing is intimate and breathy and has an easy flow.

Lyrical I cannot comment as my Gaelic is non-existent (except for *slainte* and *pogue mahone*) but there is enough melodic beauty and vocal strength in evidence to make this



Chuck Brodsky

release worth listening to. The accompaniment is simple featuring clarsach, flute, whistle, fiddle, guitar and piano. The arrangements are tasteful and possess a haunting quality. A quite beautiful album.

- By Tim Readman

### Hot Club Of Cowtown

Ghost Train

Hightone Records

The saturated hues of the hand coloured photo on the cover looks positively retro, like an old postcard, and indeed this hot trio offers up some easy-swinging 30's and 40's style cow-pop built around well harmonised vocals, the fine prairie pickwork of guitarist Whit Smith, the Grapelli-esque fiddling of Elena Fremerman, and the punchy plucking of bassist Jake Erwin.

The ten songs, most of them written by Whit or Elena, are right in the rangeland groove, with touching vocals in an endearing style. Each of them is also a jumping off point for some ripping solos. Elena has lovely technique, a fabulous tone, and a bag full of tricks that put some real zing into each foray up to the mike.

Whit, a lively guitarist, blends rootsy country licks with the knuckle twisting dexterity of swing maestro Django Reinhardt. On numbers like *Sleep, It Stops With Me, Secrets of Mine*, and the Rodgers and Hart romp *You Took Advantage of Me*, Whit and Elena show their mastery of good-time material that spurs your boots and shakes a smile out of you.

Pulsating under the duo, stand-up bassist Jake Erwin is a thigh slapping force whose dead on rhythms keep the beans on the boil. The trio hit full stride on two instrumentals, *Full Tchai*, and *Cherokee Shuffle*, confirming their intense love of jazzy stylings and fast, fluid playing. There's a spirited edge to the downright atmospheric music on *Ghost Train*, so even if Western-tinged swing isn't normally your thing, this release is lots of fun, and

worth roping in and slipping under the beam.

- By David Ingram

### Jeb Loy Nichols

Easy Now

RycoDisc

rcd 10620

What a nice combination of influences this disc is. Jeb Loy Nichols was born in Wyoming, raised in Missouri, his father was into bluegrass, his mother preferred vocal jazz, and he listened to Stax-Volt and Atlantic R & B. His first love was visual art and he pursued it in such diverse places as Austin, Texas, Greenwich Village, and London.

The disc itself is recorded in Wales. The music of all these locations mix together in a relaxed, natural way in a recording of superb, mellow, sweetness and smoothness. The songs are lovely and Nichols has an odd, crisp, distinctive and plaintive voice, which pulls all these threads together. The recording is sparse but extremely rich. I haven't heard such a sweet record since the days when Stephen Bishop was charming the knickers off every college girl in America. Tracks which should be heard extensively on radio, but probably won't be, are *Wild Honeycomb*, *Mostly Bittersweet*, and *Never coming Back*. Just lovely.

- By Barry Hammond

### Solas

The Edge of Silence

Shanachie

78046

I was a little taken aback when I first heard *The Edge of Silence*. I was prepared for straight-up all out traditional Irish music from this New-York based quintet of Irish traditional players. Instead band leader Seamus Egan has co-produced with Neil Dorfman (Dire Straits, Sting, Bruce Hornsby) an eclectic and very contemporary sounding album. There are a number of interesting interpretations of songs by Jesse Colin Young, Bob Dylan, Nick Drake and Tom Waits as well as originals from Egan and band mates Winifred Horan and Mick McAuley and two composition form new songwriter Antje Duvecot.

There is a dark and brooding quality to much of this material that creeps into your consciousness and pulls you in to listen more closely.

Many bands have tried to combine traditional instruments and playing styles with contemporary recording techniques such as sampling, sequencing and looping and have made a hash of it (can you say The Corrs?). Solas have taken their sound to new heights while making an album of musical and emotional integrity that blends these two elements with ease and considerable class.

The enormous strength of the playing and singing is the key to their success. Buy *The Edge of Silence*, you'll love it.

- By Tim Readman

### The Old Sod Band

Grass Roots  
Fallen Angle Music  
FAM04CD

The debut disc by this Ottawa-based six-piece, *Grass Roots* is a collection of relatively well known tunes of Scottish, Irish,

Quebecois, American, and Scandinavian derivation. You will recognize many of them even if you don't know the names: *Julia Delaney*, *Pointe au Pic*, *Brian O' Lynn* (known in my house as *Old John's*), *Miss Sarah McFayden*, *Josefin's Waltz*, and the list goes on. Typically the band plays them in sets of two or three, with each tune being repeated several times, a characteristic of the group's primary role as the purveyor of music at Ottawa's Old Sod Folk Music Society contra dances.

Instrumentally they cover a lot of ground: concertina, fiddle, guitar, mandolin, banjo, stand-up bass, mandola, and percussion. Yet, while the music is solid and nicely arranged, it fails somehow to ignite. Coupled with the fact that we've heard plenty of the tunes many times before, the end result is a very ordinary listening experience. For die-hard contra dance fans only.

— By Richard Thornley

### Stairhead Gossip

Stirrin' it Up  
Greentax  
CDTRAX230

If you can't say something nice don't say anything at all, we are taught as children. As such, there is little to say about *Stirrin' it Up*. Stairhead Gossip are five women who sing a cappella - mostly as an ensemble, occasionally highlighting a solo voice. Some tracks feature the sparing use of bodhran, guitar or whistle but the focus really is the voices. Their choice of material includes traditional Scottish ballads, Robbie Burns, South African anti-Apartheid songs, and they even dip into the *Oh Brother* canon with *Didn't leave nobody but the Baby*. "Stirrin' it Up" works best on the traditional Scots songs, with good strong harmonies and pleasant voices. However, most of the time they sound excruciatingly earnest - like a church or school choir that you don't dare criticize because their hearts are in the right place. The one notable exception to this is Sylvia McGowan's rich, sonorous, powerful solo *Baron O' Brackley*, but overall, this recording just doesn't move me.

— By Sandy Stiff

### Jaia Suri

Truck Stop Gypsy  
Vagabond Records

You might well wonder, "When did Joni Mitchell pick up the banjo?" upon first hearing this refreshingly eccentric California artiste. Suri evokes Mitchell's timbre in both voice and lyric, and in the obvious admiration she has for altered jazz - in this case courtesy spare, banjo-prominent acoustic support.

As a poet, she frequently lives up to the comparison with Mitchell, crafting impressively apt images the likes of "where the exhale becomes a song," from *Becomes A Song*, and "the same boys making the air unbreathable are telling you what to buy to be beautiful," from *Wearing Scales*.

No question, she has both brains and bones to pick. Alas, she doesn't have as much imagination when it comes to melody. Coupled with her disapproval of just about everything - shopping malls, movies, sugar, the middle-class, fashion - her tune-challenged droning becomes unappealing about mid-disc. The quirky insertion of banjo, cello and guitar and an astute and a brave retort to American patriotism (*Maybe Then*) almost redresses the balance. But in truth, these laudably literate compositions are closer to beat-poet recitations than memorable songs.

— By Helen Metella

### Sue Foley

Where the Action Is  
Koch Records  
KOC-CD 8822

Opening with the Doors-like title track, Sue Foley gives notice that she knows where the action is. Foley delivers sleazy vocals and stinging guitar overtop a wheezing organ. "I'm going to put on my very best clothes/my little red dress and my nylon hose," she sings. "Honey, you gotta know/I don't play around." No kidding. Foley's in fine form here, ranging from the delta sound of *Vertigo Blues* to the gritty garage band sound of *Love Disease* with its fuzzed out recording. The raw sound is, of course, the product of Colin Linden, who not only produced but helped out with guitar. She can even tone it down to deliver the wistful ballad, *Baby, Where Are You?* This trashy roots album has a nice driving beat. If Foley sounds a bit shrill at points, it's entirely forgivable, especially after you hear her rockin' version of the Stones' *Stupid Girl*. Eat your heart out, Mick.

— By Charles Mandel

### Mae Moore

It's a Funny World  
Paras Recordings  
PRC 1122

The sticker blurb on this album describing the "soulful blend of rock, folk, and jazz" coupled with Guitar Player's glowing review snippet of previous work ("confident pleas for truth and understanding with elegant acoustic guitar tracks") should serve as a warning for folk and roots listeners. There's confessional pop, first-person meanderings of the heart, jazz and aural wallpaper to be found on *It's a Funny World*. But tempering that is a fascinating mix of finely textured percussion and background vocals by producer Joby Baker - consider the sound of such instruments as beach stones, dragonfly raku pot and *Kootenay*



Sue Foley

*Forge* fire poker.

Mae Moore's supple voice has been favourably compared to *Court & Spark*-period Joni Mitchell, Jann Arden, Sarah McLachlan and Diana Krall. But why stop there: toss in early Ricky Lee Jones and even Emmylou Harris, and you have the complete mix. Listen for guitarist Marc Atkinson's fine fills and solos throughout (especially on *All I Can't Explain*). On the downside: five of the 11 tracks are revisitations to previously recorded songs, which turns this album into more of an EP. Funny world, eh?

— By Gordon Morash

### Calasaig:

Near and Far Lazymist  
R2 Records  
R2CD 2004

Calasaig are a five-piece Scottish band, playing traditional music & song from Scotland, Ireland and England as well as their own compositions. There is a Canadian connection in that the CD was recorded at Phase One Studios in Toronto. Between them they play a wide range of instruments including acoustic guitar, pipes, whistles, fiddle, banjo and mandola. They blend this instrumentation to produce a pleasant mixture of songs and tunes. The vocals are provided mainly by Keith Johnson, Kirsten Easdale and Derek Williamson. All in all this is well played and nicely arranged fare. The critics have showered adjectives such as 'tasteful, laid back and mellow' upon them. And therein lies the problem. If your tastes lead you to prefer a polished and carefully performed sound then this disc is for you. But if you yearn for something more gritty and passionate then *Near and Far* will not satisfy. I suspect that in spite of my reservations Calasaig's popularity will continue to grow and that they are destined to be performing soon at a venue near you.

— By Tim Readman



**Lightnin' Hopkins**  
The Tradition Masters  
Ryko  
TCD 1084

Great news for fans of classic blues and folk is the new Tradition Master Series being released by Ryko, a label noted for its worthy reissues. Leadbelly, Lightnin' Hopkins and Odetta are featured in titles which combine two albums from each artist into a single CD.

In Hopkins' case, these are *Country Blues* and *Autobiography Blues*. Both albums were recorded for Tradex in the early '60s and produced by Texan folklorist Mark McCormick. He favoured a purist, stripped-down approach, so he recorded with just Lightnin', a microphone and a guitar.

Given Hopkins' rich and resonant voice and simple and effective writing style, nothing else was needed. The original album titles are neat encapsulations of the work here. This is Texan country blues as performed by a pioneer and master of the genre, while his songs never strayed far from the autobiographical.

Lightnin' reportedly told McCormick that "all that have happened to me is liable to get into my songs." Thankfully, he lived one vivid life, as a workin' man, a drinker, a womanizer, gambler, and a nomadic troubadour. No shortage of raw material here.

Certainly, there's a ring of truth in a song like *Long Gone Like A Turkey Thought The Corn* ("with my long pyjamas on.") Liner notes writer Joe Nick Patoski gets pretentious in stating Lightnin' "was able to articulate the condition of the disenfranchised." Hell, Hopkins likely couldn't have defined "disenfranchised," but there's no doubting his hard-won authenticity.

Most of the 27 cuts are originals, but takes on *See See Rider* and *When The Saints Go Marching In* breathe new life into these classics. Lightnin's fluent guitar picking is a treat, especially on *Gonna Pull A Party*, which fea-

## PENGUIN EGGS

tures the conversational vocal style he sometimes prefers. Over two discs, the sound can get a little monochromatic, but Lightnin's black and white take on the blues has much to be recommended. They don't make 'em like him no more!

— By Kerry Doole

**Jennifer Noxon**  
*Sweet*  
Independent

Jennifer Noxon writes and sings some very personal songs on her album *Sweet*, and an intriguing document it is. It's the music of moods and moments, of rumination seeking illumination, of reminiscence and reconstruction of events and times. Her words are carefully woven to evoke pictures and feelings and immortalize treasured times.

A change of focus is brought to bear on *Nothing More*", which portrays the tribulations of an immigrant family whose hopes are swatted about by the reality of life on their promised land. This more objective trend continues with *Literate At Last*, weighing the advantages of learning versus intuition. Another song, *Everyday*, has a slightly disjointed feel, choppy like an urban existence, as Jennifer reflects whether our daily efforts are worth the price we pay to earn our way. After that it's back to more languorous musings, songs addressed to companions of days that seem to want describing, explaining, and a drawing of life's lessons. The total impression is more touching than exciting, but Jennifer seems self-contained and a good observer of the human condition, her voice is easy to listen to, and the backup musicians put in solid performances on a variety of instruments. One shouldn't reveal little surprises, so suffice to say there isn't a hidden track at the end, and it isn't a back-porch tip of the straw hat to an attentive crowd, whooped up with a rootsy, hoedown tinge.

Jennifer's CD reveals a poetic vision that may well spur reflection in listeners, and offer some insight into just how the people you know and the events in your days can be put into a telling perspective.

— By David Ingram

**Poles Apart featuring Tom Lewis**  
*On, My, Ocean: Songs & Shanties from the Oceans of the World*  
Self-Propelled Music  
ASM105D

With the opening chorus of Stan Rogers' *Northwest Passage* sung in Polish, you just know this is going to be one extraordinary collection of shanties. With separate sessions between Tom Lewis in British Columbia and the Poles Apart chorus and band in Poland, there was every risk that this could have gone stupendously wrong, what with the possibility of Berlitz-influenced, Polish-inflected English. Yet, the seven-man chorus singing both English and Polish is perhaps the strongest element of *On, My, Ocean*, particularly on the

numerous a cappella call-and-response pieces. There is the distinct exactitude you'd expect of classical vocal ensembles, no doubt the fine work of vocal arranger Bartosz Wasik. One singer — unknown, as the liner notes do not separate singers into their tenor, baritone and bass divisions — has a bass voice of richness and depth to die for. (Yes, that is him doing the legato bass line on *The Wreck of the Nancy*.) Only Tom Lewis' voice in lead shows strain and roughness — and that is completely in keeping with the shanty form and history. This is a major, ear-opening surprise.

— By Gordon Morash

**Marc Ribot**  
*Saints*  
Atlantic Records  
CD 83461

Inventive is the word for Marc Ribot. As guitarist for such creative types as John Zorn, The Lounge Lizards, Don Byron, The Jazz Passengers, Tom Waits and Marianne Faithfull, and his own collaborations with Cuban Postizos, you know you're going to hear more from Ribot than a standard three or four chord blues progression. This is not a highly produced or lush work. This is an extremely stripped down recording of solo guitar. It contains minimalist compositions by Zorn, Albert Ayler, and Ribot, which lean toward the discordant end of the guitar spectrum, and also traditional pieces like *I'm Confessin'* (*That I Love You*), *Go Down Moses*, and even Lennon and McCartney's *Happiness Is A Warm Gun*, which are used as the taking off point for odd and sometimes barely recognizable excursions. A disc for hard core guitarists looking for different directions, it's not an easy listen at first but, with concentration and an open mind, it yields its own rewards. The most accessible tracks are the aforementioned and *St. James Infirmary Blues*.

— By Barry Hammond

**Linda McRae**  
*Cryin' Out Loud*  
Black Hen Music  
BHCD 10522

Canada's recent track record in terms of producing credible female country singers has been rather woeful. All too often, they have just mimicked the worst traits of Nashville (big hair, schmaltzy material). It's refreshing, then, to come across Linda McRae, a real country singer and songwriter that can rival the best from south of the border.

Her name may well be familiar as a member of Spirit Of The West during their commercial heyday. McRae was with them for eight years, leaving in 1997. She has abandoned the Celtic strains, returning to the classic country traditions of her upbringing.

1998's solo debut, *Flying Jenny* showed her talent in the genre, and drew attention via some big-name guests (Syd Straw, members of Blue Rodeo and The Tragically Hip). This fol-



Tom Lewis

low-up is even stronger, and does without the star cameos. McRae's band, *Cheerful Lonesome*, is an excellent one, while producer and guitarist Gurf Morlix (Lucinda Williams, to whom Linda has been compared, Robert Earl Keen) keeps everything uncluttered and honest. He also contributed a song, the heart-rending closing duet *Falling Off The Face Of The World*, while *Gold Dust Mountain* is a showcase for guitarist/vocalist Scott McLeod, who wrote the track.

All the rest of the material was written by McRae, and her tunes have the clear ring of authenticity. Her voice has both purity and poignancy, as demonstrated on such haunting tunes as *The Station* and *Hoot and Holler*.

Let's hope this independent release gets the attention it deserves. It's damn good, fer *Cryin' Out Loud!*

— By Kerry Doole

### Reischman and Miller

The Bumpy Road

Corvus  
CR009

There are no musical bumps on this second CD by John Reischman and John Miller, two of the best acoustic musicians in the Pacific Northwest. As with their first CD, *The Singing Moon*, the instrumental duo explore the sounds of Central and Latin America and the Caribbean, with the odd foray into jazz and Celtic. Miller penned five of the tunes and Reischman two, one of which popped into his head while out for a walk. Unlike other motals, Reischman and Miller need no backing. The CD is all guitar and mandolin, beautifully unadorned and gorgeous.

— Bob Remington

### Jock Tamson's Bairns

May you never lack a scone

Greentrax  
CDTRAX 206

After two albums in the early 1980's Jock Tamson's Bairns split up, the members going on to successful careers with outfits such as The Easy Club and Ossian. However, after almost twenty years, the group decided to reunite and the end result is this new recording. While not immediately different than many other recordings of Scottish traditional music, *May You Never Lack A Scone* easily rewards the more patient listener. Most notably, the album is completely acoustic and free of studio trickery, the end result being a warm and intimate sound. An equal mix of songs and tunes, most pieces feature something just a little out of the ordinary, be it the Henry Mancini flourish on the first set of tunes, the bass drum rumble on *Gude Claret/Wee Highland Laddie*, or the Jaw harp on *Donal Don*. But for me the real highlight of the recording is the inclusion of a good number of marches and strathspeys, tunes that I seem to hear less frequently on recordings these days. The two retreat marches that are

included, *Macgregor of Ruara/The King's House*, are quite a revelation and will lodge firmly in your brain for days. Sensitively played and arranged with plenty of flair and character makes *May You Lack A Scone* a welcome return for Jock Tamson's Bairns.

— By Richard Thornley

### Jason Ringenberg

All Over Creation

Yeproc  
YEP 2036

Long before those ugly phrases 'alt-country' and 'No Depression' were coined, Jason Ringenberg fused the energy of punk with the heart and soul of genuine country music with the pioneering Jason and the Scorchers. Those cool Nashville cats never received their full due, but still remain influential. Between Scorchers reunions, Ringenberg has pursued a solo career that proves his passion still burns. His well-earned status as likely the nicest guy in showbiz pays off here as musical friends lined up to contribute to this collaborative CD.

It sees Jason deliver new and old originals and a few honkytonk favourites with a highly talented cast that includes Lambchop, Steve Earle, BR549, Todd Snider, and Paul Burch. One highlight is a reworked *Bible And A Gun* A Scorchers fave that Ringenberg wrote with Earle, it has been revised to feature a Civil War slant. Erin's Seed also reflects Ringenberg's love of American history, as it's about the Irish troops that fought on both sides of the Civil War. Given a different musical setting, these would work as folk tunes.

He has always a good ear for outside material, as shown by his version of the brilliant Jeffrey Lee Pierce (Gun Club) classic, *Mother Of Earth*, coincidentally also recently covered by The Sadies. Takes on *Don't Come Home A Drinkin'* and George Jones' *I Dreamed My Baby Came Home* will please the honky-tonk fan. *All Over Creation* is a delightfully diverse and entertaining disc.

— By Kerry Doole

### Pete Seeger

American Favorite Ballads Vol. 1

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings  
SFW CD 40150

Between 1950 and 1964, Pete Seeger recorded and released 38 albums for Folkways, among them a five-volume set of traditional American works dating from the mid-19th century. A new five-album reissue series will include those volumes, as well as selections from other Seeger projects for Folkways such as *Frontier Ballads* (1954) and *American Ballads* (1957).

While this all seems to have the aura of an exercise in ethno-musicology — particularly in the lengthy, but well-written liner notes accompanying the 28 songs in *Volume 1* — such is not really the case. Indeed, the mixture of styles found here ranges from blues and gospel to campfire songs and a variety now



Photo: Sue Wilson

Pete Seeger

referred to "American art song." What you take away from the bare-bones recording — and yes, that is Seeger's rhythmic boot thump from time to time as he plays banjo or 12-string guitar — is an appreciation for the moods of his musical choices and the guises in which he chose to perform in these recordings from 1957-62.

For instance, there's some wonderfully sophisticated guitar backing *Frankie and Johnny* (recorded in 1957) that easily recalls in simplified form The Hot Club work of Django Reinhardt. Seeger's version of *Shenandoah* (1958), whose authorship is often attributed to Stephen Foster, is as close to a cappella as you get, with just the sparsest of accompaniments; the character of Seeger's voice makes it appear that there are two singers at work here. We even hear Seeger as romantic balladeer on *Down in the Valley* (1957).

With nothing more than voice and instrumentation, you'll hear some often underrated musicianship. The 12-string bass line progression on *I've Been Working on the Railroad* (1962) is a surprise that breathes unexpected life into this old chestnut. And the banjo introduction to *Oh Susannah* is something of a revelation.

Such surprises more than make up for the occasional flat singing, sliding notes and erratic tempos. Bring on the other four volumes!

— By Gordon Morash

### Compay Segundo

Duets  
Gasa  
0927432282

As its title implies, *Duets* pairs Cuban singer Compay Segundo with 16 other vocalists, including Algerian singer Khaled, famed French throat Charles Aznavour and — wait for it — actor Antonio Banderas. Accompanying the singers are a crack outfit of well-known



Cuban musicians, including Cucho Valdes on piano. Given that Segundo is 94 years old now, the recording has a quaint, sometimes cheesy, feel to it. One song, pairing Segundo with Pio Leyva, sees the singers with a collective age of 170 years! Generally, Segundo's voice is still as rich as chocolate, but with the added smoky notes of age. Musically, the songs range from the North African influence of *Saludo a Chango* through to the more Spanish sound of *Chan Chan*. But what everyone really wants to know, of course, is can Banderas sing? On *Beautiful Maria of My Soul*, the actor's voice is surprisingly high and feminine, but he manages to pull it off. However, he won't be knocking Segundo off the vocalist throne anytime soon.

— By Charles Mandel

### Leftover Salmon

Live

Compass Records  
7 4339 2

I am lazy like anyone else really. This review can take care of itself. They call their music 'Polyethnic Cajun Slamgrass'. Who am I to argue? They say this about their new live CD, 'This is not music for people who take themselves, the tunes they listen to, or the world in general too seriously. These are musicians playing for the pure hell of it, enjoying the moment and sharing it in an unpretentious, let your hair down way with their audience.' No disagreement from me on that one either. They describe themselves thus, 'Exploding with energy, the band combines the gifted improvisational lyricist Vince Herman with speed-of-lightning mandolin and electric guitar licks from Drew Emmitt. Mark Vann intertwines innovative rock and roll banjo with Greg Garrison's groovemeister bass playing. Bill McKay belts out southern rock vocals and rippin' hot keyboards while Jose Martinez defines the "poly" in polyethnic by producing solid international rhythms' This CD is loads of fun, features monstrous virtuoso playing and has more energy than that stupid little battery powered bunny we all love to hate. I grinned from ear to ear and banged along on the dashboard to every tune. You will too.

— By Tim Readman

### Frederic Galliano and the African Divas

F Communications  
F 153  
DCDLTD

Frederic Galliano is probably most widely known as the producer of the Frikiya recordings which delivered African folk music into the creative custody of various remixers to great effect. His new, sprawling double disc set is along much the same lines as these earlier efforts: a belly of breezy French house, an electroacoustic heart and soul, and a smooth, dark African skin. It's a well-knit and very

attractive creature. Each disc is constructed as a suite, with pieces blurring one into the next, linked by street sounds, conversations, and flurries of beats. A strong pulse is evident throughout, even in the more reflective moments. The several West African singers who constitute the African divas contribute vocals to half of the tracks and almost forty other musicians are featured throughout on primarily acoustic instruments and backing vocals: Galliano's own studio treatments flesh out the weirder moments. You can dance, yes, and you can listen too.

— By Richard Thornley

### John Wort Hannam & The Sound Merchants

Pocket Full of Holes

Independent  
JWH-020621

I don't know why, but when I hear John Wort Hannam's *Wheatland*, I think I'm hearing Garth Brooks's next hit. Perhaps it's the chorus with elements in opposition that goes: "I guess some of us are wheat and some of us are chaff / 'Cause when the west wind grew / Back to town she blew / And she ain't comin' back / And while she was pullin' up stakes / I was puttin' down roots."

It's a workin', hurtin' kind of album that the Fort Macleod, Alberta-based Hannam has produced in his first outing. There are cowboys, wheat farmers, sawmill workers and fishermen galore. Fathers and sons. Loves lost and won, but mostly lost, and all sung with a forceful yearning. Every once in awhile, though, there's some confusion in the messages conveyed. Seafaring Man, for instance, opens and closes with a minor-key Slavic feel, which could be a Celtic dirge but isn't there quite. A Celtic feel would be perfect for this story of an Irishman forced by famine leave his pregnant bride, and travel to England to sign on as ship's crew headed across the ocean to North America. There's a bad end to this, yet it seems inconclusive.

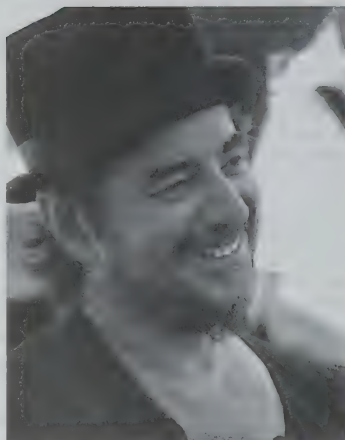
Much better is *Dammed Rivers*, an oh-so-common tale of commerce gone awry that pits the independent Dutch baker and his ilk against the superstore. Though set in an unnamed small town, it's could easily be Jasper Avenue in Edmonton. The issues are the same, and so, sadly, are the consequences.

— By Gordon Morash

### Various Artists

Going Driftless: An artist's tribute to Greg Brown  
Red House Records  
RHR CD 145

I'm quite fond of tribute CD's. For One thing, they're usually about an artist with a proven track record. There have been quite few good ones. I treasure my *The World is a Wonderful Place* featuring the songs of Richard Thompson. The tribute to Willie P. Bennett gave rise to the unexpectedly success-



Greg Brown

ful career of the wonderful Blackie and the Rodeo Kings. And *I'm Your Fan* — the songs of Leonard Cohen gave us wacky and unexpected versions of his songs. And that perhaps is the best reason to check out these collections. They're collections of interpretations usually by artists who only record their own work. It's great to hear them handle another's artist's work.

And a CD with the songs of Greg Brown and the likes of Mary Chapin Carpenter, Lucinda Williams, Gillian Welch, Shawn Colvin, Iris DeMent, Lucy Kaplansky, Ani DiFranco, among others comes with major expectations of quality. It's got to be good — right.

RIGHT. It's a fantastic record that delivers all the goods. The 14 songs are stellar as would be expected from the pen of Mr. Brown. And the women, who participated in this project, do them all justice. From the quirky vocal of Victoria Williams, to the electrifying delivery of Ferron, through the delicious darkness of Lucy Kolinsky's voice, each song is a small gem. Together placed in the setting the album, the result is an impressive piece of beautiful vocal jewelry.

And when Greg was approached about the project he stipulated the royalties should go to a charity and the Breast Cancer Fund was chosen. *Going Driftless* is a wonderful piece of work and a worthy tribute to a great songwriter.

— By Les Siemieniuk

Alan and John Kelly  
Fourmilehouse  
Compass Records

Alan and John Kelly come from a musical family in Roscommon, just east of Galway. The area has it's own style and many local tunes, and that's what the brothers feature on their first album together. If you caught De Dannan at the Winnipeg, Calgary or Vancouver festivals this summer, Alan was the

accordion player filling in for Aidan Murphy. The elder Kelly has a blossoming solo career, and is a widely respected musician on the piano accordion. John is only a year and a bit younger, and is also known, particularly around Clare, as a fine flautist. They grew up studying music together, and that history and their well-developed sympathy for each other's playing shows large benefits on this release. These two dish up the real thing, earthy and with a wonderful feel to it. Some of the tunes are well known, others they have learned from their parents and other Roscommon players. A strong backup cast adds depth to the arrangements, but it's a lot of classy soloing and unison playing that's the real payoff. Reels rule here, and a few jigs and several slower pieces make for a good varied selection. The pair has an ear for beautiful melodies too and know how to showcase them. The sound is warm, the swaying rhythms strong, and their obvious respect and enthusiasm for their material results in a real spark of an album. If you love Irish music, this one is a lovely listen, and you may be clattering on the flagstones before too long.

— By David Ingram

#### Phillips, Grier and Flinger

Looking Back

Compass Records  
7-4342-2

#### Mike Marshall and Darol Anger

The Duo Live at Home and On the Range

Compass Records  
7-4333-2

These two CDs feature some of the giants of American acoustic music, all of whom have the talent and ability to get "out there" with their interpretations of traditional material. Mercifully, neither of these discs reach too far into the ozone. When they do, they come back to Earth nicely by quoting the melodies to songs like *Jerusalem Ridge*, *Old Dangerfield*

*Down in the Willow Garden*, *Big Mon and In the Pines* (Marshall and Anger) and *Tennessee Blues*, *Monroe's Hornpipe*, *Old Dangerfield* and *Dixie Hoedown* (Phillips, Grier and Flinger). The latter also do great interpretations of Jimi Hendrix's *Little Wing* and Lennon and McCartney's *I Want You (She's So Heavy)*. All of these musicians have a wonderful sense of playfulness, which comes out both in the music and in the live banter of Marshall and Anger, who were partners in such great bands as the David Grisman Quintet and Psychograss. Both of these CDs from Compass are keepers.

— By Bob Remington

#### Bob Egan

The Promise

Independent  
GarCorps 2002

As a steel guitar man with everyone from Freakwater and Wilco to Oh Susanna and Blue Rodeo, Bob Egan has distinguished himself as a fine player, both on tour and in the recording studio. *The Promise* is a competent solo debut. However, the key to having a really successful disc in the country-tinged genre is to have great songs and a great, or at least memorable, vocalist to put them across. This is where Egan's disc falls short. There's plenty of nice guitar sounds, good playing, and even The Be Good Tanyas to supply haunting backing vocals. There's competent, crafted songs but no stand-outs and, while Egan has a deep and pleasant voice, it doesn't leap out of the recording. He's going to have to keep learning and stretching, digging deeper, or collaborating with another, more heavyweight songwriter, or vocalist to have solo success. It's either that, or continue a perfectly respectable career as a sideman.

— By Barry Hammond

#### Kelly Willis

Easy

Rykodisc  
P2A 310622

There has been little *Easy* about the career of this American country singer/songwriter. This scribe recalls her playing to just a handful of people in a Toronto club over a decade ago. Her pure and passionate voice soon turned ears and she signed a deal with MCA. Willis' attitude was always more Austin (her home base) than Nashville, and mainstream country radio never accepted her.

Her albums were critical favourites, though, and Rykodisc signed her after she split with MCA. 1999's *What I Deserve* was a strong effort, and *Easy* is even better. Unlike the cookie-cutter female country vocalists manufactured by Music City, Willis has something to say. She co-produced the CD and wrote six of the ten cuts here, including one apiece with Gary Louris (Jayhawks) and John Leventhal (Rosanne Cash). Other compositions are by that great Australian writer Paul

Kelly (whose *You Can't Take It With You* is given a cool bluegrass treatment), Marcia Ball, the late, lamented Kirsty MacColl (*Don't Come The Cowboy With Me Sonny Jim*), and hubby Bruce Robison.

Players include Chuck Prophet and Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan, while Vince Gill, Dan Tyminski and Alison Krauss take cameos. This is clearly Willis' show though. Her vocals retain that unmistakable ring of authenticity, and the quality of the material is high.

The only real complaint is the disc's brevity (around 37 minutes). After a three year absence, a couple more tunes would have been nice.

— By Kerry Doole

#### Rob MacKillop

The Healing: Scottish Lute,

Oud, Mandour, Cittern

Greentrax  
CDTRAX 227

Deceptively academic in appearance (the album's subtitle is *Scottish lute and cittern music 17th to 21st centuries*), Rob MacKillop's *The Healing* is in reality an artistic and emotional outing that should appeal to fans of early music and instrumentalists of all kinds. Mostly instrumental solos, the recording on first listen sounds deceptively plain. Interesting however, is the quiet that seeps into the proceedings, and occasional incidental noises which make for a tactile experience.

*The Healing* opens with the justifiably well-known Neil Gow's *Lamentation for the Death of His 2nd Wife*, usually a fiddle tune but performed here by MacKillop on lute. This is followed by several other tunes on the same instrument, including the earliest known notation of Auld Lang Syne from the Balcarres manuscript.

MacKillop then switches to cittern for seven pieces from the Robert Edwards Commonplace Book and *The Lowlands of Holland*. The disc closes with two originals from piper, Matt Seattle and two MacKillop compositions. The first, *Nine*, is the only vocal piece on the recording. Over MacKillop's oud James Robertson intones the poem from which the piece takes its name, Robertson's response to the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots. "Nine dead men between the earth and sun this morning are the horror that upholds your lie." Powerful stuff.

The final and title track is subtitled *Pibroch for lute*; in keeping with this form of composition it is a lament, in this case for the events of September 11. With its drones and percussive flutters it would not be out of place in a collection of modern electroacoustic music, but it too is a very powerful piece.

On this performance, as with so many others on the recording, MacKillop's technical mastery fades into insignificance beside the intensity and quiet power of his music.

— By Richard Thornley



Photo: Robert McGee

Kelly Willis



## Big Jack Johnson with. Kim Wilson

### The Memphis Barbecue Sessions

MC-Records

Barbecues are, at best, informal affairs. This backyard party is no exception. Big Jack's rhythmic intensity is at home in this acoustic session, ably supported by Kim Wilson on harp who helps round out the country blues feel that permeates this satisfying, spontaneous-sounding disc.

Guesting on two tracks is the inimitable Pinetop Perkins on piano but, for the most part, this is a classic, laid-back meeting of two masters at home with each other, committed to following each other's leads. Johnson does most of the steering, running through five of his own songs before tackling the likes of Elmore James, Jimmy Reed, Little Walter and Howlin' Wolf. His own *Humming Blues* is a stand-out track for its gentle touch, highlighting Johnson's craggy, backwoods vocals, nicely shadowed by Wilson's harp shadings and Perkins' tasteful ivory tickling.

Likewise, *Smokestack Lightning* provides an illuminating glimpse into this hard-working combination. Albeit an obvious cover, it showcases the powerful partnership between the Oilman and the Thunderbird as it underlines each players' ability on his instrument: powerfully passionate and simply spellbinding. It's an album that may initially feel like it's fallen together but soon becomes a touchstone that grows in importance with repeated playing.

— By Eric Thom

## Otis Taylor

Respect The Dead

NorthernBlues  
NBMD009

Otis Taylor has earned his share of respect within the blues community, culminating in his recognition as Best New Artist of the Year at this year's Handy Awards. This 'new' artist is no spring chicken; however, and he's seen behind a few closed doors in his time.

He's also developed a rather twisted methodology for the telling of his dark tales, adding an intoxicating element of something to the blues like few before him: fear. His gruff, unsettling voice rises like a demented spectre over the ground fog, almost gasping for air as he bleakly confesses each crime, or outlines unspeakable acts of injustice as if more lives depended on his every word.

He seems a conduit for the undead and he has found a kindred spirit in producer/bassist Kenny Passarelli, who harnesses Taylor's single-minded powers, framing each composition with uniquely rhythmic musical patterns and odd, offbeat instrumentation to eerie, haunting effect (*Hands On Your Stomach*).

The net result is downright menacing, demanding your attention as it drives chills down your back. Daughter Cassie adds layers of ghostly back-up vocals while Passarelli pile-drives each rhythm into your skull, more

than offsetting the abandonment of a drummer, if not creating a revised role for a bassist. Eddie Turner can approximate the screams of the damned at will, yet is restrained on this outing, adding even darker shades to complement the repetitive, almost droning riffs driven by banjo, mandolin or acoustic guitar. Totally captivating and utterly hypnotic — like a bad dream that you can't wait to continue.

— By Eric Thom

## Steve Tilston

Life By Misadventure

Market Square  
MSMCD108

*Life By Misadventure*, originally released in 1988, it is impossible to pigeonhole. On the one hand very much the product of a quintessentially English singer-songwriter, it is also full to the brim with more traditional music influences: Spanish guitar, Irish tunes, tango, African dance. Its biting social, personal, and political insight also bears the test of time and is quite deserving of this recent re-release.

Tilston considers this one of his best records and there's plenty here to support that opinion: *These Days*, a comment on the late 80s political landscape (just as true today, unfortunately); the wonderfully titled *Lazy Tango*; the sad clarity of *Polonaise* ("...standing where the jackboots ground the bricks to dust, wanting to run away, feeling that I must remain..."); and *Sometimes in this Life*, a reminder of the vagaries of existence.

All of this is delivered by Tilston's masterful finger-picking and vocals, with piano, cello, guitar, and percussion filling out the sound. To sweeten the reissue, *Life By Misadventure* closes with a bonus track, *Rhapsody*, a 23-minute suite of Irish tunes that finds him hewing even closer to a traditional sound.

— By Richard Thornley

## Rick Holmstrom

Hydraulic Groove

True North  
TN132

Hydraulics may account for some of the power on this disc but the groove is undeniably massive. Purists may balk at the intervention of samples and DJ mixes, especially in light of Holmstrom's brilliant past backing such blues royalty as William Clarke and Rod Piazza, but Holmstrom has clearly hit his stride. This is a sensational statement of a man taking the blues to new heights while remaining loyal to the sounds of his past.

Under the influence of avant garde keyboardist John Medeski, Holmstrom bends and shapes each track, gluing together elaborate layers of guitar-based textures with various samples and groove-based jazz for a uniquely soulful sound that is guaranteed to raise eyebrows in traditional circles. And while it's also a departure from the largely blues-based paths of his previous solo efforts, it is by no means a



Otis Taylor

desertion of his roots. Holmstrom's guitar is what brings even the most progressive excursion on *Hydraulic Groove* back full-circle to the blues.

Each track is a powerhouse: from the funk of *Bobo The Hobo* to the various hypnotic configurations of *Shake It, Part 2*, the slightly Doors-ish, *My Maria* and the twisted Dick Dale-influenced *Back It Up*. It will grow on you like a new bad habit.

— By Eric Thom

## Scott Cameron Smith

Easy Street

Skydiver Canadian Songs  
SCS 7501

*Easy Street* is the follow-up to Hamiltonian Scott Cameron Smith's first outing, *Poets and Painters*. With the exception of the splendid *The Flowers of September*, a fully orchestrated and mixed-chorused commemoration to September 11, much of *Easy Street* is derivative and heavily stocked with clichéd lyrics. The title track especially is rife with good intentions, but poor choice of by-now much overused imagery ("She fell into the cracks between the concrete and the city").

Much better is *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*, which plumbs the same subject matter but with much more intensity and poetry ("Listen to the wind moan / Listen to her stomach sing for more"). Throughout, you'll find singing and writing styles that recall Bruce Guthro, James Keelaghan, and the Rogers boys, Stan and Garnet.

Still, it can be worth the time, if only for *Flowers* and *How Many are the Days*, a fisherman's plight that carries the lines: "We'll never take defeat. / So if the oceans rise again, / save us from the greed of men / Who wouldn't know a haddock / from a banker's seat."

— By Gordon Morash

# Live

Blueberry Bluegrass  
and Country Music Festival  
Stony Plain, AB  
August 2-4, 2002

**Reviewed by Donald Teplyske**

Located west of Edmonton, Stony Plain, The Blueberry Bluegrass and Country Music Festival, in its sixteenth year, welcomed over 2000 patrons each of three days.

Although this year's edition experienced unseasonably finger-numbing conditions, the organizers, site crew, and performers weathered the elements to deliver another in a long line of well organized, family-oriented, and musically impressive festivals.

Local talent was well represented with two splendid combos opening the weekend's festivities. Down To The Wood kicked things off with a set that featured fine harmonies embellished by the guitar dexterity of Marc Ladouceur. Their three sets over the weekend set a high standard for future area performers to aspire. The Lonesome Brothers, playing what may have been their swansong performance, contributed an impressive and suitably gritty set highlighted by several original compositions.

Proving that bluegrass soul is not limited to the Appalachians, the energetic family unit Black's Mountain delivered tightly harmonic vocals accompanied by supportive instrumentation. Lisa Bennett may have broken more than one bluegrass tenant while sending her hips higher to yonder but the appreciative audience reveled in the spunk and spirit of their bluegrass-shaded, Maritime-flavoured, foot-stompin' kitchen music. New Brunswick's accidental ambassadors of acoustic blue music were the surprise hit.

With all due apologies to Steve Earle, the Liberty Bluegrass Boys may be the most entertaining traditional bluegrass band working today - and I'll stand on Jimmy Martin's coffee table and tell him so! This Texas band, featuring a rich mix of driving bluegrass, inspired gospel, and country corn displayed the musical integrity and comedic timing that has continually endeared them with Blueberry audiences.

The best thing that can be said about Jimmy Martin's performance is that he had the good taste to bring the legendary Bill Yates (Country Gentlemen) along to play bass. Thoroughly unprofessional - under rehearsed, rude, and rambling - Martin did nothing to enhance his self-appointed reign as King of Bluegrass.

On the other hand, Rhonda Vincent & the Rage cemented their hold as bluegrass music's preeminent act. Weaving in and out around the single mic set up, the Rage displayed instrumentation of epic proportions including stellar banjo fills from Kenny Ingram, incredible flat-picking from Audie Blaylock, and one of the music's finest young fiddlers, Hunter Berry. Resplendent in her role as a bluegrass beacon,

Vincent exhibited humour and grace throughout the weekend with the added bonus that she can flat out sing!

Among the other acts appearing as main stage entertainers were Ontario's Hard Ryde, Alberta's Maple Creek, a reunion of the Good Ol' Persons featuring Kathy Kallick, Sally Van Meter, and string wizard John Reischman, and Within Tradition. With no two bands adhering to similar styles, Artistic Director John Tames outdid himself by booking a diverse blend of performers.

This year's edition of Blueberry experienced more than its share of sound troubles which the organizers will undoubtedly address in short order. As many festivals do, a rotating cast of emcees might be something the organizers may wish to consider to enhance the spirit of heterogeneity they so obviously strive toward.

In addition to the mainstage headliners, Blueberry offers amateur and semi-professional performers the opportunity to share their talents through a Showcase Stage competition, a band scramble, and a Sunday gospel stage. True workshops - where patrons can ask questions and receive demonstrations of techniques from the headliners - are also offered. One of the finest features of Blueberry remains the accessibility of all performers to the patrons - even Jimmy Martin stood for hours following his sets meeting his fans and signing autographs.

Colum Sands & Sharon Aviv  
Hammersmith Irish Centre  
London  
August 2, 2002

**Reviewed By Ken Hunt**

As the brochure puts it, songs, stories and song-stories "can help break the silence that marks so many divided communities". The blurb proves more than blurb. On stage Colum Sands cuts a slight, somewhat owlish figure with a real-life frizz of hair and, in the great tradition of story-tellers, an imaginary pince-nez. He is Irish. Sharon Aviv is shorter, darker, with straight hair. Since her hands are not obliged to play the guitar, she weaves patterns in the air with them to accent or stab home words or phrases as she declaims or croons. She is Israeli. They met at the Sidmouth festival. Their joint presentation is called "Talking to the Wall". "Tell me a story, I'll sing you a song..." might be the subtitle for the whole shebang.

The programme uses walls as a linking metaphor. Despite the odd reference to Africa, Uruguay or Hanuman, they dodge other walls like Berlin's or suchlike rubble, to focus 'theoretically' on "the walls of Jerusalem, the walls of Derry" and use English and Hebrew to tell a mixture of mainly traditional Irish, Hebrew and Arab tales. "Talking to the Wall" proves massively extendable. The first encounter with pithiness that hits home is, "If you can't improve on silence then don't speak at all." It is the first of many genuine profundities, many poignant, many multi-layered. 'Many' is no

cop-out. Sharon Aviv delivers insights like the Irish parable where a goat represents Death, a man Old Age and a woman Youth. Colum Sands adds new insights into being misdirected. The present tense is the only one. As evenings go, it gripped and made you ask for more, the way bedtime stories got to you as a child. Even as you drifted off, you heard your own voice asking for another one.

Scarlett O', Juergen Ehle & Matthias Binner  
Brecht-Weigel-Haus, Buckow,  
Germany  
20 July, 2002

**Reviewed By Ken Hunt**

In 1867 the railway snaking out from Berlin brought the lakeside town of Buckow within reach of Berliners. Over the next hundred years it became a favoured playground for visitors of many sorts, but, through associations with Adalbert von Chamisso, Theodore Fontane and other writers, it developed a literary shine. On his return to Germany after exile in the States, the playwright Bertolt Brecht and the actress Helene Weigel settled in Buckow, recipients of a little state devilry and largesse.

Scarlett O', the former Scarlett Seeboldt who sang with the acclaimed folk group Wacholder (Juniper) for over two decades, belongs to a select, alarmingly shocking few. She not only sings through their mouth but sells a song with their entire body. Juergen Ehle came to the forefront playing lead guitar for the defining East German rock group, Pankow (named after a part of East Berlin). Their keyboardist, Matthias Binner is the trio's token Wessi (West German).

There were moments aplenty in the programme when the trio could have been understudying the Everly Brothers' 'Stories We Could Tell' as they interlaced narrative and song in the telling of Heymann's life (1896-1961) and times into a programme of songs sung in German, English, Russian and French. The trio gave readings from Heymann's autobiography and connecting spoken passages explaining maybe a song's context, maybe a little piece of Heymann's history, perhaps about the women in his life, his boyhood in Königsberg, his musicality and linguistic flair, his entry into film music, his flight from the fascism, years in Hollywood and on his return to the Fatherland having to prove his credentials by singing a German folksong.

He passed this last spurious test by singing one of his own, illustrating not only how ingrained his songs were in the German psyche but also the pointlessness of hamstringing folksong as a concept. As a backdrop for Heymann's songs, the setting was immaculate. More tellingly, it was a setting that they had to live up to. You have to be good to get to perform at the Brecht-Weigel-Haus. To use a coinage so frequently debased, the concert was magical.



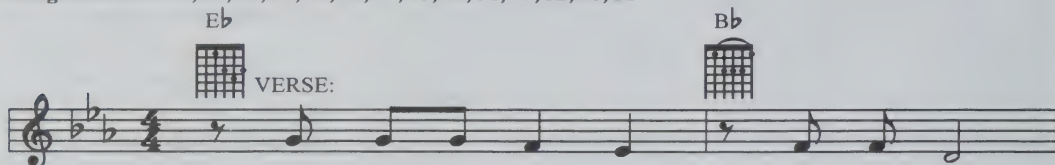
# THE FARM AUCTION

Words and Music By Enoch Kent

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Song structure: V1, C1, V2, C1, V3, V4, C1, V5, V6, C1, V7, C2, V8, C1


VERSE:



- |    |             |             |            |              |              |       |
|----|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| 1. | A           | rust - ing  | trac - tor | on           | the          | hill  |
| 2. | The         | let - ter   | came on    | a            | Wed - nesday |       |
| 3. | There's     | bone and    | sil - ver  | nap - kin    | rings        |       |
| 4. | And there's | cof - fee   | pots we    | nev - er     | used         |       |
| 5. | Like        | fire -      | glow and   | fav - ourite | songs        |       |
| 6. | O           | remem - ber | when the   | lights       | were low     |       |
| 7. | There's     | a jar       | of nails   | and a        | box of       | tacks |
| 8. | That are    | number - ed | now with   | colour - ed  | tags         |       |



- |    |                |                 |                     |          |         |                |                  |          |
|----|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------|---------|----------------|------------------|----------|
| 1. | the fence post | with the        | print - ed          | bill     | that    | says           | the sale         | was      |
| 2. | the bank       | said that       | we had              | to pay   | or      | else           | they'd           | take the |
| 3. | el - as        | tic bands       | 'round              | spoons   | and     | tin - y        | fin - gers       |          |
| 4. | sil - ver      | frames          | a lit - tle         | bruised  |         | a - round      | the por - traits |          |
| 5. | laugh - ter    | they're         | the things          | a - mong | the     | mem - or - ies | that             |          |
| 6. | pies           | bal - loons     | and mis - tle - toe |          |         | morn - ing     | sun - light      |          |
| 7. | the din - ing  | chairs with     | the wick - er       | backs    | they're | in the         | gar - den        |          |
| 8. | books          | and cloth - ing | sold in             | bags     |         | bought         | for learn - ing  |          |



- |    |        |             |                  |       |           |         |
|----|--------|-------------|------------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| 1. | on     | un - til    | ev - ery         | thing | was       | gone    |
| 2. | farm   | a - way     | and they         | said  | they'd    | take it |
| 3. | held   | the strings | of               | that  | fiddle    | in the  |
| 4. | that   | amused      | in               | the   | parlour   | and the |
| 5. | still  | be - long   | with - in        | those | empty     | rooms   |
| 6. | on     | the snow    | who will         | buy a | bro - ken | sleigh? |
| 7. | piled  | and stacked | and              | being | spotted   | by the  |
| 8. | bought | for rags    | ev - ery - thing | must  | go        |         |

Chorus 1 and 2:

- |    |         |
|----|---------|
| 1. | And the |
| 2. | And the |

Ab Eb Ab

auc - tion - neer comes here to - day priv - a - cy up -  
 auc - tion - neer comes here to - day cars line the side - walk

Eb Ab Eb

pon dis - play the high - est bid - der takes a - way but  
 black and grey child - ren watch the odd dis - play while

Bb Bb Eb

To Verse: Last Chorus Ending

they can't take it all they can't take it all.  
 their moth - ers touch the lots

Penguin Eggs is determined to cultivate and strengthen an interest in folk music in Canada by printing score sheets to character contemporary songs we consider written in a traditional style. Enoch Kent's poignant and moving The Farm Auction qualifies on all counts. It can be found on his stellar recording, I'm A Workin' Chap (Second Avenue Records: SAS 2007) Much thanks to Enoch for allowing us its use and also to Lisa Weitz and Tim Harrison for providing the transcription

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Canada's Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

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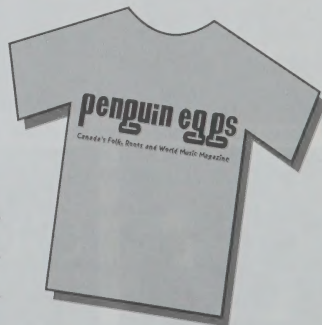
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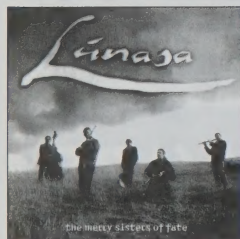
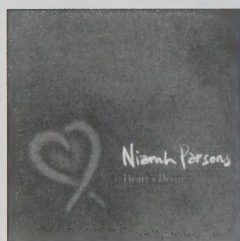


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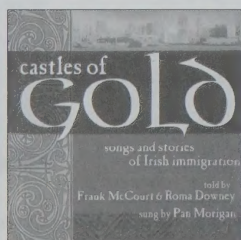
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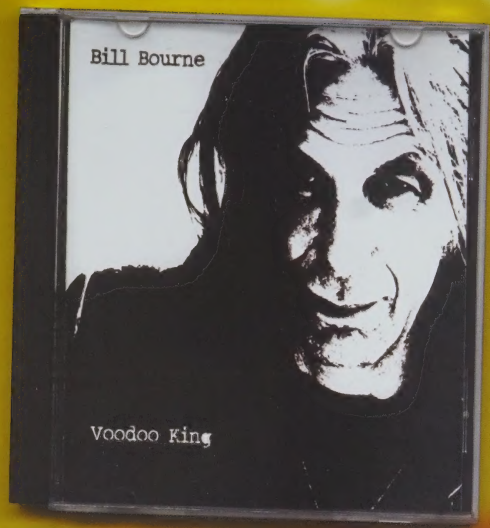
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